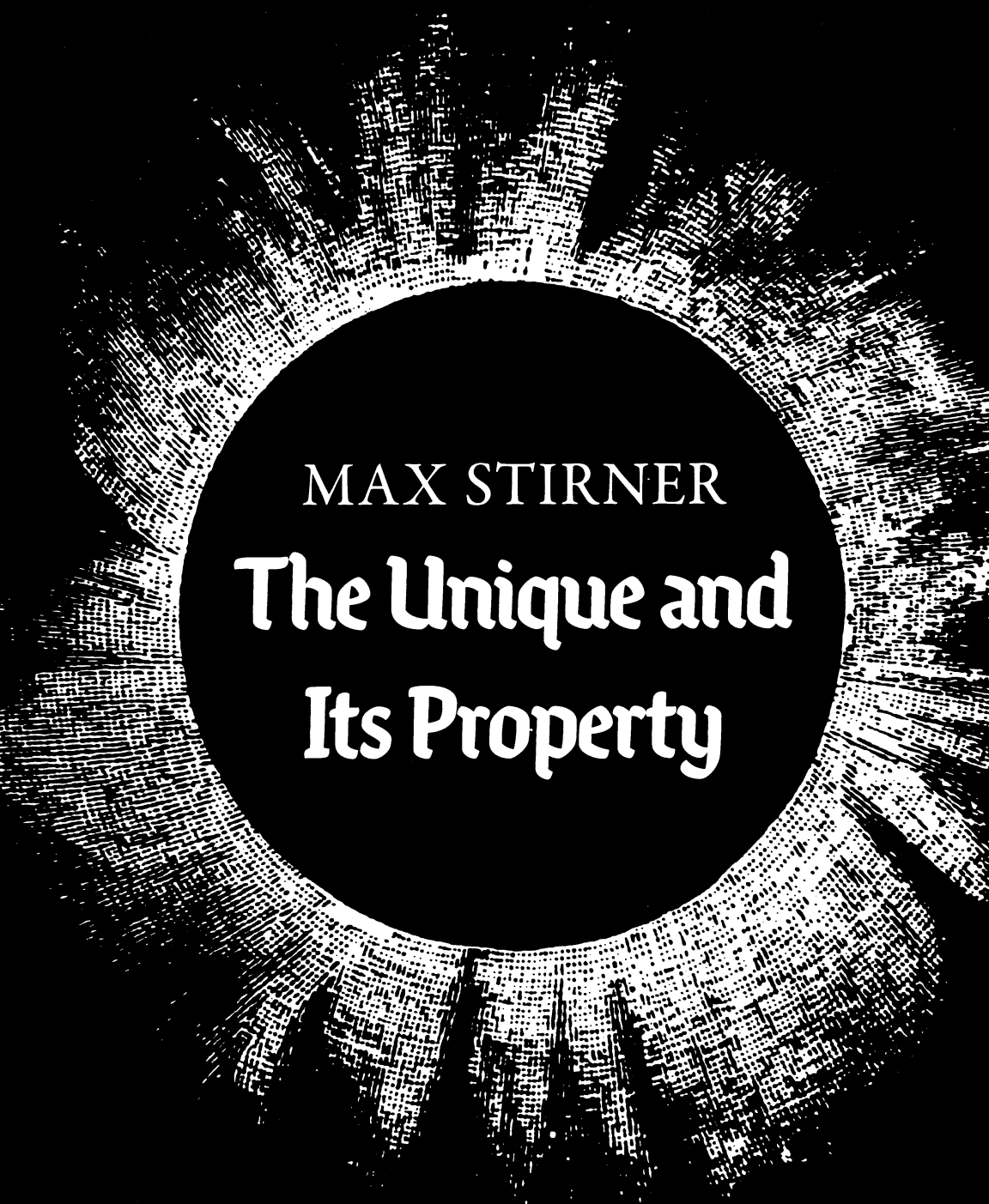
"Some call it *The Anarchists' Bible*, others call it *The Billionaires' Bible*"—Benjamin R. Tucker
"A veritable Breviary of Destruction, a striking and dangerous book."—*New York Times*



MAX STIRNER

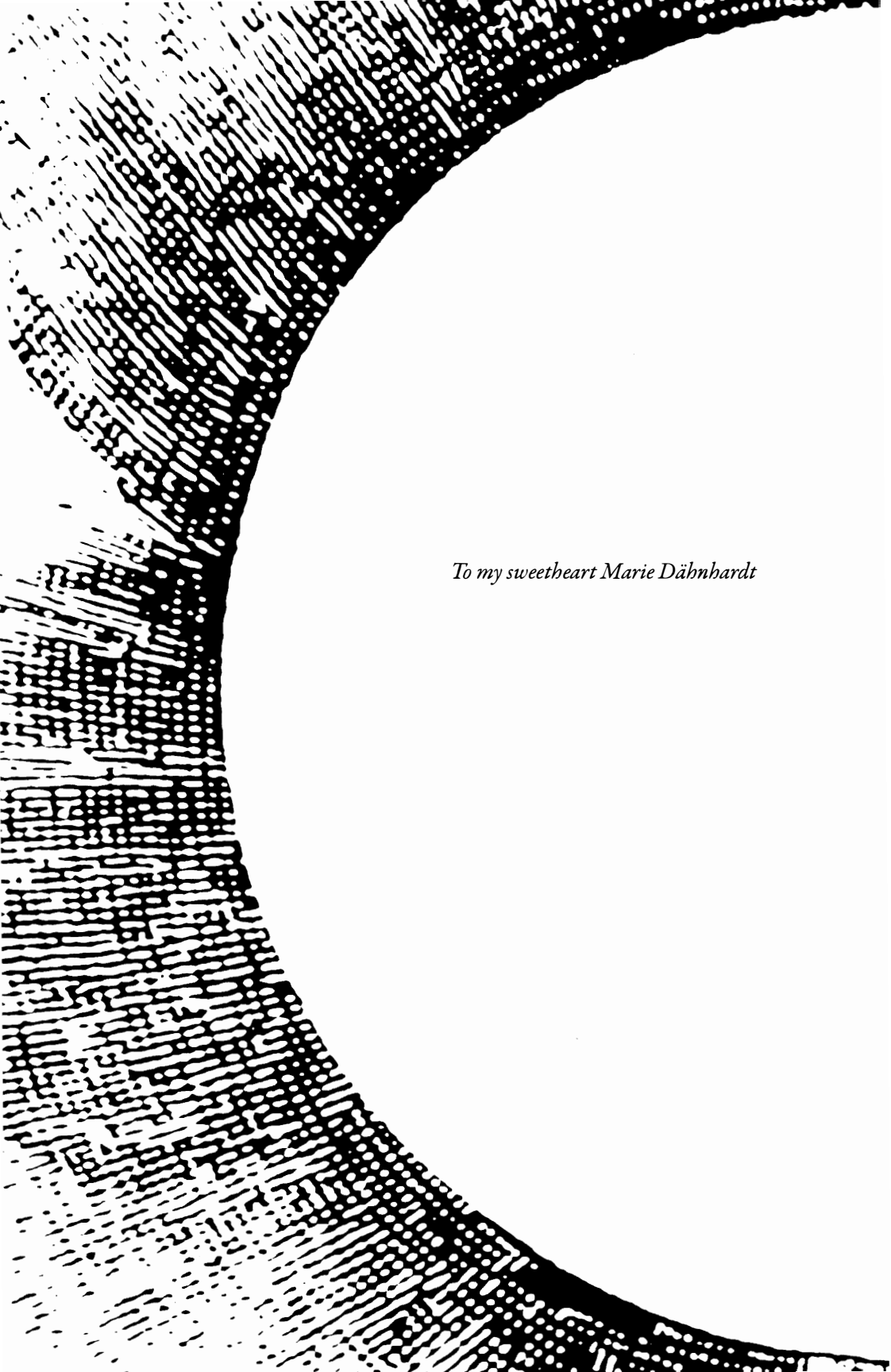
The Unique and Its Property

A New Translation, with Introduction by

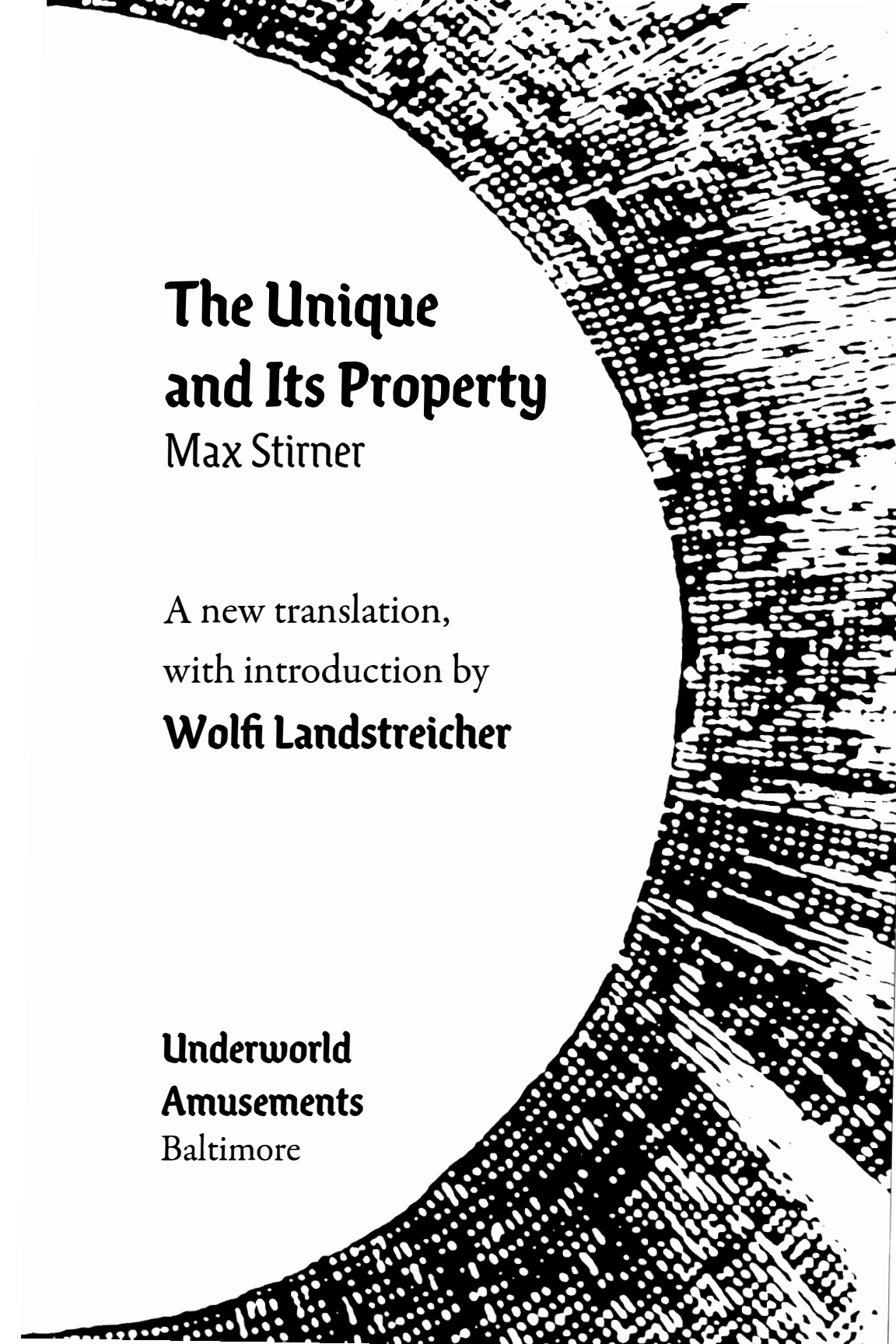
WOLFI LANDSTREICHER

The Unique and Its Property

Max Stirner



To my sweetheart Marie Dähnhardt



The Unique and Its Property

Max Stirner

A new translation,
with introduction by
Wolfi Landstreicher

Underworld Amusements
Baltimore

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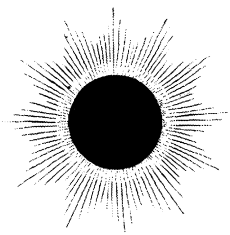
Footnotes whose number at the bottom of the page is
followed by a triangle are found in early German editions,
though often expanded upon here by translator.
All others are solely by the translator.



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Introduction

Why A New Translation?

First of all, I enjoy the play of languages and the play of words. For me, making a translation is a form of play. It has aspects of a puzzle, aspects of a complex joke, aspects of an alchemical experiment (what will come of the attempt to draw concepts from one language into another?). All of this moves me to translate, recognizing that every translation is an *interpretation*.

When I first read *The Ego and Its Own*, I recognized that there was a great deal of humor, sarcasm, and satire throughout the book. I never understood how anyone could call Stirner "humorless"—yet certain critics (particularly those who wanted to present him as a precursor of the political right or some other sort of "supreme evil" in their eyes) accused him of precisely this. After translating *Stirner's Critics* and "The Philosophical Reactionaries," I realized the extent of his mocking, sarcastic, and, at times, bawdy humor and the breadth of his wordplay. My play with these translations and talks with Jason McQuinn[1] clarified some of the flaws I had recognized in the existing English translation of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, and the pleasure I find in the activity of translating moved me to take up the project.

1 Jason McQuinn is an editor of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* and *Modern Slavery: The Libertarian Critique of Civilization*, and the author of "Clarifying the Unique and Its Self-Creation: An Introduction to 'Stirner's Critics' and 'The Philosophical Reactionaries,'" which introduces my translation of the two writings by Stirner (Max Stirner, *Stirner's Critics,* translated by Wolfi Landstreicher, LBC Books and CAL Press, 2012). For those interested in exploring the intellectual background of Stirner's ideas, McQuinn's detailed introduction is a good place to start.

The first English translation of Stirner's book appeared in print under the title *The Ego and His Own* in 1907. It was the work of Steven T. Byington, an individualist anarchist involved with the circles around Benjamin Tucker. Tucker funded the project (and published the result). He insisted on the use of "ego" in the title, even though it is not at all an accurate translation of "*Einzige.*" Byington was very skilled with languages and worked most of his life as a translator and proofreader. So it isn't a surprise that Tucker would turn to him to translate Stirner's work. But there are some reasons to question whether Byington was the best choice.

Though he was an individualist anarchist, he was also a Christian—not a fundamentalist, obviously, but an active member of the Ballard Vale Congregationalist Church (now the Ballard Vale United Church) in Andover, Massachusetts and its clerk for thirty-two years. He made a life-long project of translating the Bible into modern English under the name of *The Bible in Living English.* Could a good Christian translate a work like Stirner's without twisting the basic meaning? I have my doubts.

I will not deny the value of Byington's translation. Without it, I would not have read Stirner or been motivated to revive my skills in the German language. But no one has even thought of doing another translation. John Carroll[2] drastically abridged it and made a few revisions. David Leopold[3] revised it to get rid of anachronisms (and supposedly to add sentences and phrases left out in Byington's translation), but Leopold must have missed a few things himself.[4] But otherwise this translation has been treated almost like a sacred text—an irony in light of its content.

I decided to do a new translation because, on reading the German, I realized that the mistranslation of the title and the first and last sentence[5] were not the only major flaws in Byington's effort. Throughout the

2 Editor of the "Roots of the Right" edition of the book.

3 Editor of the "Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought" edition.

4 I came across phrases and sentences in the original that do not appear in Leopold's edition. They do appear in this one.

5 The first and last sentence of the book are the same, the significance of which I shall go into later, and are a quotation from a Goethe poem. At the end of the book, this mistranslation causes the relationship between the preceding paragraph and this sentence to be lost.

book a reader will find the word "ego" used not only to translate "*Ich*" (I), but also at times to translate "*Einzelne*" (individual) and "*Einzige*" (unique). In addition, there were the occasional crudities that Byington chose to clean up and humor that he seemed not to get. But most of all, after reading *Der Einzige* in the original German, I felt that Byington had lost enough of Stirner's playful ferocity that I wanted to make another attempt with the aim of bringing more of this out. And besides, as I said, I like playing with language. I like the wrestling match of trying to bring not just a meaning, but a feeling, from one language into another. I knew I had a challenge of several years (I started working on this in 2010). It was a challenge I would enjoy.

For Whom Did I Do This?

I have given the most significant answer to this question already, but obviously if I were doing this only for myself, I wouldn't get it published. However much I may enjoy playing with myself, I always find an added pleasure when I play with others. This is why I want to toss my translation out to certain others to make the game more exciting, but not just to anyone. So I will start by saying a bit about those for whom I did *not* do this.

I did not make this translation for academics, for institutional intellectuals who want to dissect this unflinching and playful critique of all fixed ideas as a mere *text* in order to maintain their career. I know some academics will make use of it for their own purposes in any case, and to the extent that they are doing this for their own enjoyment, I would expect nothing less. In turn, some of them may provide me with fodder for furthering my own egoistic purposes. But I will not cater to them. Because—to the extent that they accept their role within the institutional structure, i.e., to the extent that they *are* and act as academics—they are as distant from the "immense, reckless, shameless, conscienceless, proud—*crime*" that willful self-creation and self-enjoyment require as any bureaucrat, any police officer, any other government employee[6],

6 Since the vast majority of universities are state-run, those pursuing a career in them are government employees. Those universities not run by the state are run either by religious institutions or by groups connected to the corporate power structure, making the careerists in them employees of the church or of corporate institutions.

and so could never be my *accomplice* in my self-creation.

I made this translation instead for those who rebel against all that is held sacred, against every society, every collectivity, every ideology, every abstraction that various authorities, institutions, or even other individuals try to impose on them as a "higher power"; for those who know how to loot from a book like this, to take from it those conceptual tools and weapons that they can use in their own defiant, laughing, mocking self-creation, to rise up above and against the impositions of the mass. In other words, I did this translation for those who know how to treat a book not as a sacred text to either be followed or hermeneutically dissected, but as an armory or a toolbox from which to take whatever will aid them in creating their lives, their enjoyments, their relations, and their conflicts in the ways that give them pleasure.

So my notes to Stirner's writing are brief—intended to provide just enough historical and contextual clarification to make it easier for potential rebellious accomplices to more easily draw out the tools and weapons they desire. The academics who want to build a career on Stirner can do their own research (or check Leopold's overly-lengthy notes in the Cambridge edition).

Having said this, I think that it will be useful to the rebellious readers if I say a bit about Stirner's project as I understand it and about some of my translation choices.

Stirner, the Wise Guy

Almost every scholar of Stirner, whether self-taught or university-trained, insists on referring to the author of *The Unique...* as a philosopher. I can't recall Stirner ever referring to himself as such, and certainly, by the time he wrote his book, he had concluded that philosophy was a joke that its purveyors took far too seriously, buffoonery deserving only laughter. And to call the mocker of philosophy a philosopher is as absurd as calling the *impious* atheist[7] a theologian.

Philosophers pursue answers in the ultimate sense—universal

7 As opposed to both the theist and the *pious* "atheists" who replace god with another deity.

answers. And so they are, indeed, *lovers* of wisdom. They conceive of wisdom as something objective, as something that exists in itself, *beyond* any individual, and so as something they have to pursue, rather than as their own *property*, their attribute, to use as they see fit. They are still attached to the idea of a "wisdom" that is greater than them, you or me. Stirner called them "pious atheists," a particularly biting barb in a country where the most extreme Christians were known as "pietists." So long as a person continues to pursue this *external*, supposedly universal wisdom, he may well be a *wise man* (whatever that means), but he will never be a *wise guy*. Stirner was a wise guy, because he recognized that there is no ultimate, universal wisdom to find; the philosopher's goal is a pipe dream worthy only of mockery and laughter. And Stirner mocked and laughed often in the most delightfully crude ways in his writings. Unfortunately, both his critics and his disciples have largely missed the joke.[8] And explaining a joke is never as much fun as playing the joke. Hence, Stirner's increasing exasperation (still humorously and even savagely expressed) in *Stirner's Critics* and "The Philosophical Reactionaries."

Despite the tedium of explaining a joke, I will make the effort to do so to some extent, largely because some who have taken Stirner too literally and seriously have drawn the most ridiculous conclusions about him and those rebels who have found his writings useful in developing their own rebellious thought.

To begin with, Stirner is mocking philosophy itself. This is evident in his comments on Socrates in *The Unique and Its Property*, as well as in "The Philosophical Reactionaries." Though he certainly aimed his laughter most fiercely at the philosophy and the philosophers of Germany in his time—Hegel, his precursors, his disciples and his "left Hegelian"[9] critics—Stirner's mocking, playful logic undermines the whole of the philosophical project, leaving no place

8 No one who got the joke could ever be a *disciple* of Stirner, since he provided no *answers*, nothing whatsoever to believe in, nothing more than some tools for undermining all belief, all fixed thought.

9 This term was not one used by any of those given the label, but one imposed later by historians of philosophy to make it easier to distinguish these mid-nineteenth-century critics of Hegel from the more orthodox followers of Hegel. A number of them were friends or at least associates in groups like *die Freien* (the Free Ones), who met in Hippel's wine bar. Stirner took part in this group.

for metaphysics, ontology, ethics, etc., beyond an individual's own personal preferences in behavior.

The main focus of his mockery is the Hegelian method, as this had become the dominant philosophical method in Germany at the time Stirner lived. And his joke is woven throughout this book. First of all, he carefully constructed the outline of *The Unique* to parallel that of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* and Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, while undermining the foundations of both works. Some scholars have called him the ultimate Hegelian, because he makes use of Hegel's dialectical method[10] in his book. However, in "The Philosophical Reactionaries," Stirner explains that this too was part of the joke: "Do you philosophers actually have an inkling that you have been beaten with your own weapons? Nothing but an inkling. What retort can you hearty fellows make against it, when I again dialectically demolish what you have just dialectically put up? You have shown me with what 'eloquence' one can make all into nothing and nothing into all, black into white and white into black. What do you have against it, when I turn your neat trick back on you? But with the dialectical trick of a philosophy of nature, neither you nor I will cancel the great facts of modern natural research, no more than Schelling and Hegel did."[11] Stirner chose to use the methods of those he was mocking to undermine what they claimed those methods showed, not because he believed in those methods, but because he wanted to show that, at best, they were mere intellectual tools, ones that could be turned to damn near any use in the realm of ideas.

In fact, what Stirner has to say leaves no room for any sort of universal or historical *progress*, dialectical or otherwise. It is no accident that Stirner begins and ends his book with the same words, taken from Goethe's poem "Vanitas! Vanitatum Vanitas!" I have translated these words (fairly literally) as: "I have based my affair on

10 I specifically say "*Hegel's* dialectical method," because his dialectic was a very specific, progressive formulation which was supposed to achieve an ultimate synthesis at the end of history, unlike the ancient Greek dialectic which simply referred to ongoing discussion of ideas with no final culmination.

11 Stirner, Max, "The Philosophical Reactionaries," in *Stirner's Critics* (translated by Wolfi Landstreicher), pp. 106-107, LBC Books and CAL Press, 2012.

nothing." Goethe's poem has the feel of a drinking song, something friends might sing laughingly together at a bar. Stirner's use of it at the beginning and the end of the book was a way of saying, "I'm having fun, and that's all that matters, so don't take any of this too seriously." And what he proposes—fully aware *self-enjoyment* and *self-creation for your own enjoyment*—are as thoroughly ahistorical and anti-progressive (in any universal or historical sense) as moralists and ideologues of the left and right may claim. But this is what makes his proposal genuinely rebellious and genuinely anti-authoritarian. Because history and progress have always been the history and the progress of ruling powers who want everyone to live for them and the ideals and values they impose.

In light of Stirner's anti-historical, anti-progressive, thoroughly in-the-moment, self-centered perspective, readers need to realize that any talk of historical processes and any apparently *progressive* descriptions in Stirner's book are part of the joke, part of his mockery of the positions he is tearing apart. I recently read a pamphlet[12] in which one of the writers assumes that the section in *The Unique* entitled "A Human Life" expresses Stirner's view of how individuals develop. But in the very title of this section, Stirner gave us a heavy-handed hint that this is not *his* viewpoint, that it is part of the joke. Though Stirner's mockery is an attack on all fixed ideas, on all ideals placed above each unique being and his self-enjoyment, its central attack is on the *humanism* that Feuerbach, Bruno and Edgar Bauer (and the other "critical critics"), and the various liberals and radicals of the time, put forward as the replacement for christianity and theism. When Stirner speaks of a "human life," he is not talking about his life, your life, my life, or the life of "humanity" in general[13](since for Stirner, "humanity" itself is a mere phantasm—as he explicitly says more than once). He is telling the reader who gets the joke that he is presenting a caricatured, mocking perspective of how his opponents view human development, with the intent of twisting it against them.

In the same way, the picture Stirner presented of a supposed

12 *Max Stirner's Political Spectrography* (Spectral Emissions, Seattle, 2015), by Fabian Ludueña, introduction by Alejandro de Acosta.

13 To use the phrase of Alejandro de Acosta, "a more or less intentional gesture towards a prehistoric anthropogenic moment" (*ibid.*, p. vii).

historical progress in "Part I: Humanity" (and particularly in "The Hierarchy) was not his own perspective on history. Stirner was quite intentionally ahistorical. Instead he was making a mockery of Hegel's dialectically progressive view of history in order to twist it back on those who used this Hegelian view to support their perspectives. The apparent racial hierarchy found in the perspective Stirner was mocking comes straight out of Hegel[14] (though Hegel, like most of the progressive thinkers of the time, did not understand race biologically and assumed all humanity could eventually achieve the progressive transformation in which he believed), and Stirner's mockery is a delightfully politically incorrect *joke* on the cultural hierarchy Hegel assumed. Stirner's playful argument is that, even if you assume that there is a history that progresses, by Hegel's own logic, you have to end up back at *egoism.* All that progress won't bring us anywhere else... And his attribution of "Mongolism" to his German contemporaries shows that even one of his tactics for avoiding the censors (using "China" or "Japan" instead of "Germany" whenever he was making a critical reference to the German authorities of his time) was part of the joke.

In fact, Stirner may well have been making a deeper joke here. I realized on my first reading of Byington's translation of Stirner that there were many parallels between Stirner's ideas and aspects of taoism and buddhism. Already, in 1906, Alexandra David-Neel[15] compared Stirner's ideas to those of the taoist Yang-Chou. Stirner emphasized the transience of each individual and rejected any crystallized, permanent "I" as much as any other permanent idea, seeing it as yet another phantasm. He saw getting beyond the limits of thought as a necessary part of living fully as one's transient self here and now. He saw self-enjoyment as most fully achieved in *self-forgetfulness.* And in *Stirner's Critics*, he spoke of the unique (*der*

14 See particularly Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* and *History of Philosophy*.

15 Best known for her adventures wandering in Tibet and her writings on Tibetan buddhism that sprang from these adventures, Alexandra David-Neel was a young friend of Elisée Reclus and sometimes wrote for anarchist publications. In "The Theory of the Individual in Chinese Philosophy: Yang-Chou," she compared the ideas of an early (and somewhat controversial) taoist, Yang-Chou, to those of Stirner. This essay can be found in *Neither Lord nor Subject: Anarchism and Eastern Thought*, Enemy Combatant Publications, 2016.

Einzige) in ways quite similar to those used to speak of the *tao* in the *Tao Te Ching*: "Stirner names the unique and says at the same time 'names don't name it.' He utters a name when he names the unique, and adds that the unique is only a name. ...What Stirner *says* is a word, a thought, a concept; what he *means* is neither a word, nor a thought, nor a concept. What he says is not the meaning, and what he means cannot be said."[16] Was Stirner aware of these similarities? I don't know which of Hegel's lectures Stirner attended while he was at the university in Berlin, but I have confirmed that Hegel gave lectures on Eastern philosophy. This indicates that buddhist, taoist, and other Eastern writings were available in Germany at the time. And I would like to think that Stirner read some of these and, as is appropriate for an egoistic self-creator, took what he found appealing and useful from these writings to enhance his own way of living and viewing the world. If so, this adds a certain ironic depth to his play on German "mongolism."

I could go on trying to explain more of Stirner's jokes, more of his humor, his sarcasm, his mockery, but as I said above, explaining jokes is never as much fun as making them. For Stirner, there was no ultimate aim of history, no inherent progress, and so for him the dialectic could never be anything more than a tool. The use he found for this tool was precisely that of using the dialectic to undermine the dialectic. And this worked best through mockery and sarcasm. Stirner was a thoroughly *impious* atheist, what I like to call a *bare-fisted* atheist. He had no need or desire for a god in his life, not even some ultimate crystallized "I" to be achieved, and he was willing—and in fact took pleasure in—accepting the full implications of his godlessness. Without a god there is no basis for morality; without a god there is no basis for the sacred; without a god there is no universal meaning, no universal aim, no universal purpose; in fact, no universal *universe*. *The* universe is an absurdity. The only meanings, aims, purposes, and *universes* are the very ephemeral, transient ones that individuals create for themselves. In the face of this overall absurdity, you could choose to ignore it and assume the universality of your own meanings, thus becoming what Stirner called a "duped egoist";

16 Stirner, Max, *op. cit.*, p. 54, p. 55.

this is the path typical of the religious (including ideologues like Marx and his followers, Hitler and his, or Mises[17] and his). You could let it overwhelm you and fall into a new religion of cosmic pessimism, where the absurdity is a horrifying god (whether you call it by that name or not), and so again become a "duped egoist." Or you could do what Stirner did and see the humor in the ultimate absurdity, recognizing that this lack of universal meaning and purpose is what gives you and I the capacity to willfully create our lives for ourselves. Stirner willfully grasped his own self-creative power and took aim at all that was considered sacred with the intention of demolishing it. He knew the best weapon for demolishing the sacred is mocking laughter. Instead of being a wise man, Stirner chose to be a *wise guy*, and if you don't get the joke, the joke's on you...

About the Translation

As I said above, I enjoy translation. At the same time, every translation has its frustrations, and particularly one of this scope. One of the greatest frustrations for me was that Stirner used a great deal of wordplay in the original, most of which I could not translate into English. This wordplay does a lot to show the playful, joking, mocking nature of Stirner's writing. Unfortunately, footnotes showing wordplay don't have the same feel as the wordplay itself (just as the explanation of a joke doesn't evoke laughter). Nonetheless, I did put in footnotes intended to show the extent of the wordplay in this book. Where you see a series of footnotes in a passage that show only the German words, I intended this to show where Stirner was using wordplay.

Another thing that could be frustrating for a translator is that translation is always, unavoidably, *interpretation*. I do not find this aspect frustrating, since I intend to make any writing I read and enjoy

17 Ludwig von Mises was one of the major theorists of the Austrian school of economics, an extreme laissez-faire school of economic theory. The proponents of this school of economic thought remain thoroughly mired in Aristotelian thinking and so assume that Reason (in an absolute, unitary sense) provides the best understanding of economic forces at play. For this reason, they remain as religious in their thinking as marxists. A number of Libertarians, anarcho-capitalists, and other free-market anarchists adhere to the doctrines of the Austrian school.

my own in any case. However, I do think it could be useful to readers for me to explain some of the choices I made in doing this translation.

The title contains two of the words central to Stirner's intent. They are "*Einzige*"[18] and "*Eigentum.*" In *Stirner's Critics*, Stirner made it clear that "*Einzige*" was, for him, merely a name, a word used to point to something indescribable and inconceivable because it was incomparable, and every description, every conception, requires comparison. What is this inconceivable, indescribable, incomparable entity? It is me here and now in this moment, you here and now in this moment, each utterly transient individual being existing only in the immediate present. Any words used to describe this will be inadequate, because they will fall into a comparison and so a lie. So Stirner chooses simply to give it a name. I found that there were a few ways to translate "*Einzige.*" In most instances, I chose to translate it as "the unique." Not "the unique one," because Stirner did not intend for "*Einzige*" to *describe* a being, but to rather simply to give a *name* to that which is beyond description in order to point to it in writing. In my translation "the unique" is that name. However, another possible way to translate "*Einzige*" is "the only one." There are a few passages in *The Unique* where this translation gets the sense across better, and there I used this phrase. Where "*einzige*" is used as an adjective, I simply translate as "unique."

My choice to translate "*Eigentum*" as property was an easy choice. The German word, like the English "property," has a broad spectrum of meanings not limited to the economic one. In *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, Stirner mostly used it in the broadest sense, to mean all the traits, experiences, actions, things, etc. that make an individual in the moment utterly unlike any other individual. How broadly Stirner understood both the unique and its property is quite clear in this passage from *Stirner's Critics*: "You, the unique, are 'the unique' *only together with 'your property.'* ... Meanwhile, it doesn't escape you that what is yours is still itself *its* own at the same time, i.e., it has its own existence; it is the unique the same as you..."[19] So there is nothing

18 In German, all nouns other than pronouns are capitalized. When a German word is used both as a noun and as an adjective, you can tell the difference by whether it is capitalized or not.

19 Stirner, *op. cit.*, p. 63

humanistic in "the unique." Every animal, every tree, every rock, etc. is also, for itself, the unique with its own property, its own world, that extends as far as its capacities, as Stirner would put it. And for Stirner, my property is precisely the whole of my world to the extent that I can grasp it. Your property is the whole of your world to the extent that you can grasp it. Property then is a "phenomenology of perception" combined with my capacity to take in and act on that perception. When I become aware of my own power in this, why would I ever choose to reduce my property to what the state permits to me? How could I ever limit it to economics? When Stirner talks about specifically economic property in "My Intercourse," he points out that *private* property is also *state* property, not my own property, because it exists only by law, that is, by permission of the state. For myself, I own worlds. To the state, I can only own what it permits (i.e., what those who benefit from the existence of those relationships you and I call "the state" allow). When Stirner talked about property, he was talking about the *worlds* of experience, perception, imagination, and action that you and I take and create, devour, and destroy for ourselves. This is what you have to keep in mind if you want to understand what Stirner said about property.

Two other words of significance in Stirner's writing are "*Egoismus*" and "*Egoist.*" I don't bring these up because there is any question about how to translate them. Clearly, "egoism" and "egoist" are fine translations. But there are a few dunderheads around who seem to think that egoism means a belief in something called "the ego" and an egoist is a believer in this thing. No, egoism is acting as the center of your world, and an egoist is one who recognizes himself as such. So aware, willful egoism is nothing other than facing your world *selfishly*, or better, in a shamelessly self-centered manner.[20]

In attacking the sacred, Stirner attacked the "*Geist.*" You can find variations (in noun, adjective, and adverb form) of the word throughout the book. "*Geist*" has a broader range of meaning than any of its English equivalents, and so I wasn't able to choose just

20 This does not at all rule out generosity, love, friendship, association, etc. It simply means that I, as egoist, relate and interact, in whatever way I do, for the enjoyment I get out of it.

one word to use for it throughout the book. Among the possible translations are "spirit," "mind," and "intellect." In different contexts, one or the other of these words makes more sense, so I made my choices based on context. In the same way, adjective forms of this word (for example, "*geistlich*") can be translated as "spiritual," "mental," "intellectual," and the like. Again I made my decision based on context. But I think it would be useful to those of you reading this book to know that whenever any of the English words mentioned above comes up, they refer to the single German word "*Geist*."

Stirner's attack is against all that is sacred, but at the time he wrote, Feuerbach, Bruno and Edgar Bauer, and a good number of reformists and revolutionaries of various perspectives were putting forward various versions of *humanism* as a replacement for christianity. As Stirner pointed out, these "pious atheists" were creating a new version of the sacred, a new "higher power." So Stirner particularly attacked this *humanism* with vicious sarcasm. For this reason, I decided that it was important to translated the genderless noun "*Mensch*" as "human being" rather than "man." In addition, since "*Unmensch*" is specifically a German word that is used to name monsters, I felt I could more clearly express Stirner's intent in distinguishing the ideal "*Mensch*" from the actual "*Unmensch*" by using "inhuman monster" for the latter. Byington's "unman" simply seemed to me to lack the sarcastic punch Stirner intended.

"*Wesen,*" like "*Geist,*" is another term with great significance in Hegelian philosophy. In most cases, I have translated it as "essence," because it does not refer to the actual being of flesh-and-blood individuals, but to a "higher" conception of what such individuals "should" be. The few times I use "being" rather than "essence" to translate "*Wesen*" are in passages in which Stirner used "*höchste Wesen*" (Supreme Being) to refer to god.

Stirner made fairly frequent use of the word "*Lump*" throughout the book. Byington translated this term as "ragamuffin." I chose instead to translate it as "pauper," because I think this latter term more clearly expresses what Stirner wanted to get across with this term: someone who identifies as a *victim* of the surrounding world and so as "propertyless" and therefore takes up begging as their way of life.

Another term Stirner used frequently throughout the book is "*Spuk*." This is actually the noun form of the German word "*spuken*" which would translate into English as "to haunt." The most literal translation of "*Spuk*" would probably be "haunting" used as a noun, but although I felt that "spook" has too much of the connotation of some sort of haunting *thing*, I felt "haunting" wasn't quite concrete enough. So I chose to translate "*Spuk*" as "phantasm." This term seems to me to express that *for the believer* this source of haunting seems concrete enough, but most likely it is all imaginary. The haunted person is being haunted by his own creation.

Finally, I could have translated "*Bürger*" as "bourgeois," "citizen," or "commoner," but the term always has the connotation of someone who owns legal property, as opposed to a proletarian which, in Stirner's time, referred to someone who was legally propertyless. Since Stirner made use of this distinction in a number of places in the book (after all, among those whose ideas he was criticizing were the communists of the time), I have usually translated the word as "bourgeois," although occasionally, where it made more sense in context, I translated it as "citizen."

I think this is a sufficient explanation of my choices in this translation. I understand that each of these choices reflects an interpretation I have made. I made these interpretations because I think that they both more clearly reflect Stirner's intentions and make the book more useful for the self-creative rebels who for whom I made this translation effort.

A Few Final Words

Though obviously anyone can read this book and use it as they see fit, I made this translation first of all for my own pleasure, and secondly as a gift to other aware, willful, and rebellious self-creators as a tool and a weapon in their project of creating their lives on their own terms against all that would impose upon them. Stirner's ideas and words have quite a bit to offer, but even more, his *method* provides a most useful and enjoyable weapon: merciless and mirthful mockery, the sarcastic use of his opponents' methods to twist their own ideas back against them, the cruel and joyful laughter of one who sees past

the delusions that keep others in chains.

Stirner combined the small jokes of wordplay, (mostly) subtle lewdness, and sarcasm with an overarching *joke* that undermined the edifices of philosophy, religion, politics and all systems of overarching *thought* to demolish the foundations of the sacred. But this is a battle that each one of us has to fight for her or himself. Stirner found enjoyment in writing this. His grin stretches across the pages and reminds all of us who rebel and create for ourselves that this is all one great, wild, joyful joke played on every "higher value," a book intended to pull the rug out from under everything that anyone holds sacred.

—Wolfi Landstreicher

The Unique and Its Property

I Have Based My Affair on Nothing

What is not supposed to be my affair! Above all, the good cause, then God's cause, the cause of humanity, of truth, of freedom, of humaneness, of justice; furthermore, the cause of my people, my prince, my fatherland; finally even the cause of mind and a thousand other causes. Only my own cause is never supposed to be my affair. "Down with the egoist who only thinks of himself!"

Let's see then how they deal with their cause, those for whose cause we are supposed to work, sacrifice ourselves, and be filled with enthusiasm.

You are able to report thoroughly on God, since you have investigated "the depths of divinity" for thousands of years, and have seen into its heart, so that you can probably tell us how God himself deals with "God's cause," which we are called to serve. Nor do you conceal the Lord's activities. Now what is his cause? Does he make an alien cause, the cause of truth or love, his own, as he expects us to do? You are outraged at this misunderstanding, and you inform us that God's cause is indeed the cause of truth and love, but this cause cannot be called alien to him, because God himself is truth and love; you are outraged at the assumption that God might resemble us poor worms by promoting an alien cause as his own. "Should God promote the cause of truth, if he is not himself truth?" He cares only for his own cause, but since he is all in all, therefore all is his affair! But we, we are not all in all, and our affair is utterly small and contemptible; therefore, we must "serve a higher cause." —Now it is clear, God cares only for what is his, deals only with himself, thinks only of himself and looks out only for himself; woe to all that is not well-pleasing to him. He serves nothing higher and satisfies only himself. His cause is—a purely egoistic affair.

How does it stand with humanity, whose cause we should make ours? Is its cause perhaps that of another, and does humanity serve a higher cause? No, humanity sees only itself, humanity wants to promote only humanity, humanity itself is its own cause. So that it develops, it lets people struggle away in its service, and when they have accomplished what humanity needs, it throws them on the dung-heap of history in its gratitude. Isn't humanity's cause—a purely egoistic affair?

I don't at all need to show that everything that tries to push its cause over on us is concerned only with itself, and not with us, only with its well-being, and not with ours. Just have a look for yourselves at the rest. Do truth, freedom, humaneness, justice want anything else than that you get enthusiastic about them and serve them?

They all do exceptionally well when they are zealously revered. Take a look at the nation, which is defended by devoted patriots. The patriots fall in bloody battle or in the fight against hunger and need; what does the nation say about that? With the manure of these corpses, the nation becomes a "blossoming nation." Individuals have died for "the great cause of the nation," and the nation sends some words of thanks after them—and profits from it. I would call this lucrative egoism.

But just look at the Sultan who so lovingly cares for "his own." Isn't he pure selflessness itself, and doesn't he sacrifice himself hour after hour for his own? Yes, of course, for "his own." Try just once to show yourself not as his own, but as your own; for escaping his egoism, you will take a trip to his jail. The sultan has based his affair on nothing but himself; he is for himself the all in all and the only one, and tolerates no one who dares not to be his own.

And won't you learn from these shining examples that the egoist gets on best? I, for my part, take a lesson from them, and instead of serving those great egoists unselfishly anymore, I would prefer to be the egoist myself.

God and humanity have based their affair on nothing, on nothing but themselves. I likewise base my affair on myself, this I who just like God am the nothing of all others, this I who am my all, this I who am the Unique.

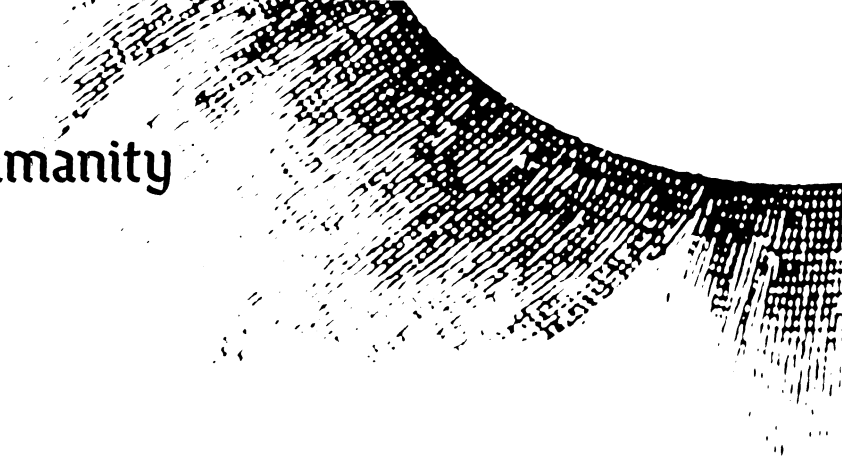
If God, if humanity, as you affirm, have enough content in themselves to be all in all to themselves, then I feel that I would lack it even less, and that I would have no complaint to make about my "emptiness." I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself create everything as creator.

Away, then, with every cause that is not completely my affair. You think that at least the "good cause" must be my affair? Which good, which bad? I am myself my own affair, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither makes any sense to me.

The divine is God's affair; the human cause is "humanity's." My affair is neither the divine nor the human; it is not the good, the true, the just, the free, etc., but only my own, and it is not general, but is—unique, as I am unique.

For me, there is nothing greater than me!

1. Humanity



For the human being, the human being is the supreme being, Feuerbach says.
The human being has just now been discovered, Bruno Bauer says.

Well then, let's take a closer look at this supreme being and this new discovery.

1.1. A Human Life

From the moment that he sees the world's light, a human being tries to extract himself from its confusion, in which he too is tossed about along with everything else, and finds himself.

But everything that comes in contact with the child also defends itself against these encroachments and maintains its own existence.

Consequently, since each one *holds to itself* and at the same time continually comes into collision with others, the *battle* for self-assertion is unavoidable.

Victory or *Defeat*—the fortune of the battle wavers between the two alternatives. The victor becomes the *lord,* the defeated one, the *subject:* the former exercises *supremacy* and the "rights of supremacy," and the latter carries out the "duties of the subject" with awe and respect.

But the two remain enemies and always lie in ambush: they lie in wait for each other's weaknesses, the child for those of her parents, the parents for those of their child (e.g., fear); either the stick vanquishes the human being or the human being vanquishes the stick.

In childhood, liberation takes the course wherein we try to find the reason for things, to get at what's "behind things"; therefore we spy out the weaknesses of all, for which, as everyone knows, children have a sure instinct; therefore, we find pleasure in breaking things, in rummaging through hidden corners, prying into what is covered up or out of the way, and trying our hand at everything. Once we get at what's behind things, we know ourselves with confidence; when we discover, for example, that the rod is too weak against our defiance, we no longer fear it, we "have outgrown it." Behind the rod, more powerful than it, stands our—defiance, our

defiant courage. We slowly get at what's behind everything that was weird and scary to us, behind the weirdly dreaded power of the rod, the father's stern look, etc., and behind all of it we find our—tranquility, i.e., imperturbability, fearlessness, our counter-force, superior strength, invincibility. Before the things that once inspired fear and respect in us, we no longer shyly withdraw, but take *courage.* Behind everything, we find our courage, our superiority; behind the sharp command of parents and bosses, our courageous choice or our outwitting cunning still stands. And the more we feel ourselves, the smaller that which once seemed insurmountable appears. And what is our trickery, cunning, courage, and defiance? What else but—*mind!*

For quite some time, we are spared a conflict that leaves us so short of breath later, the fight against *reason.* The most beautiful childhood passes without requiring us to fight against reason. We pay it no mind at all, don't deal with it, accept no reason. We are convinced of nothing through *persuasion,* and are deaf to good reasons, principles, etc.; but we find caresses, punishment, and the like hard to resist.

This sharp life-struggle with reason comes in later, and begins a new phase; in childhood we scamper about without too much reflection.

Mind is the name of the *first* self-discovery, the first banishment of God from the divine; that is, from the uncanny, the phantasms, the "powers above." Our fresh feeling of youth, this feeling of self, is no longer impressed by anything; the world is explained to its discredit, because we are above it, we are *mind.*

Only now do we see that we have not viewed the world *mindfully* at all, we've only stared at it.

We exercise our first powers on natural forces. Parents impress us as a natural force; later we say: father and mother are to be left behind and all natural forces considered as broken. They are vanquished. For the rational, i.e. the "intellectual human being," there is no family as a natural force; a refusal of parents, siblings, etc., appears. If these are "born again" as *mental, rational forces,* they are not at all what they were before.

And a young person doesn't just vanquish parents, but human beings in general; they are no obstacle to him, and he doesn't take them into

consideration; for now he says: One must obey God rather than men.[1]

Everything "*earthly*" steps back to a contemptible distance beneath this high standpoint, since this standpoint is—the *heavenly*.

Now the attitude has completely turned around; the youth takes up a *mindful* manner, whereas the boy, who did not yet sense himself as mind, grew up in mindless learning. The former does not try to grasp *things*—for example, to bring the data of history into his head—but rather the *thoughts* that lie hidden in things; therefore, for example, the *spirit* of history. The boy, on the other hand, most likely understands *connections,* but not ideas, the spirit; and so he strings together whatever he can learn, without proceeding *a priori* and theoretically, i.e., without searching for ideas.

If in childhood one had to overcome the resistance of the *laws of the world,* now in everything one plans, he bumps into an objection of the mind, of reason, of *his own conscience.* "That is unreasonable, unchristian, unpatriotic," and so on, the conscious calls to us and—frightens us away from it. We fear neither the power of the vengeful Eumenides,[2] not Poseidon's wrath, not God, as far as he sees even the hidden, nor the father's punishing rod, but rather—*conscience.*

Now we "dwell on our thoughts" and follow their orders just as earlier we followed parental, human ones. Our actions conform to our thoughts (ideas, conceptions, *beliefs*) as in childhood they conform to the orders of our parents.

However, we were also already thinking as children, and our thoughts were not fleshless, abstract, *absolute,* i.e., **nothing but thoughts,** a heaven for itself, a pure world of thought, *logical* thoughts.

On the contrary, they had only been thoughts that we had about a *thing:* we thought about the thing in this way or that. Thus we may have thought: "The world we see there was made by God," but we didn't think of ("investigate") "the depths of divinity itself." We may have thought: "This is true about this thing," but we didn't think about the true or truth itself, nor bring together in one sentence "God is truth." We did not touch "the depths of divinity, which is

1 A reference to Acts 5:29.

2 The term literally means "the kindly ones," but refers to the Erinyes or Furies of ancient Greek mythology who were goddesses of vengeance.

truth." Pilate doesn't linger over logical, i.e., theological, questions: "What is truth," but has no hesitation, therefore, in determining in the individual case, "what is true in the thing," i.e., whether the *thing* is true.

Every thought tied to a *thing* is not yet *nothing but a thought,* absolute thought.

To bring *pure thought* to light, or to cling to it, this is the desire of youth; and all the shining lights in the world of thought, like truth, freedom, humanity, the human being, etc., enlighten and inspire the youthful soul.

But if the spirit is recognized as the essential thing, it still makes a difference whether the spirit is poor or rich, and therefore one tries to become rich in spirit. The spirit wants to spread out to found its empire, an empire not of this world, the world just vanquished. So then, it longs to be all in all in itself; in other words, although I am spirit, I am not yet *perfectly* spirit, and must first strive for the perfect spirit.

But with that, I, who had just found myself as spirit, immediately lose myself again, in that I bow before the perfect spirit, not as my own, but as otherworldly,[3] and feel my emptiness.

Indeed, spirit is essential for everything, but is every spirit also the "right" spirit? The right and true spirit is the ideal of the spirit, the "Holy Spirit." It is not my or your spirit, but simply—an ideal, otherworldly one, it is "God." "God is spirit." And this otherworldly "Father in heaven gives to those who ask him."[4]

The man is distinguished from the youth in that he takes the world as it is, instead of presuming that it is everywhere in the wrong, and wanting to improve it, to mold it to his ideal. In him, the view that one has to deal with the world according to his *interest,* and not his *ideal,* is established.

As long as one knows himself only as *spirit,* and puts all his value in being spirit (it becomes a light thing for the youth to give his life, his "bodily" life, for nothing, for the silliest point of honor), for so

3 *Jenseitigen* in the original. The word can be translated as "opposite" or "other," but is generally used in theological contexts, this implying "otherness" in a specifically mystical sense.

4 ▸ Luke 11:13.

long he also only has *thoughts,* ideas that he hopes to be able to realize once he has found a sphere of action; thus, in the meantime, one has only *ideals,* unfulfilled ideas or thoughts.

Only when one grows fond of himself in the flesh, and enjoys himself just as he is—but it is in mature years, in the man, that we find this—only then does one have a personal or *egoistic* interest, i.e., not only an interest of the spirit, for example, but rather total satisfaction, satisfaction of the whole fellow, a *selfish* interest. Just compare a man with a youth, and see if he doesn't seem harder, less noble, more selfish. Is he therefore worse? No, you say, he has only become more certain, or, as you also call it, more "practical." But the main thing is this, that he makes *himself* more the center, than does the youth, who gets enthused about other things, for example, God, the fatherland, and so on.

Therefore the man shows a *second* self-discovery. The youth found himself as *spirit* and lost himself again in the *general* spirit, the perfect, holy spirit, the human being, humanity, in short, every ideal; the man finds himself as *embodied* spirit.

Boys had only *non-intellectual* interests, i.e. thoughtless and devoid of ideas; youths had only *intellectual* interests; the man has bodily, personal, egoistic interests.

If the child lacks an *object* to occupy itself with, it feels boredom; because it does not yet know how to occupy itself with *itself.* Conversely, the youth throws the object to the side, because for him, *thoughts* arose out of the object; he occupies himself with his thoughts, his dreams, occupies himself intellectually, or "his mind is occupied."

The young person deals with everything non-intellectual under the contemptuous name of "outward appearances."[5] If he nonetheless sticks to the pettiest outward appearances (for example, student club[6] customs and other such formalities), it happens because and if he finds *mind* in them, i.e., if they are *symbols* to him.

As I find myself behind things, that is, as mind, so I must later also find *myself* behind *thoughts,* namely, as their creator and *owner.* In

5 The German word "*Äußerlichkeiten*" can also mean trivialities, superficialities.

6 A reference to often clandestine student clubs that appeared in German after the Napoleonic Wars, dedicated to national German unity and often also to more democratic institutions.

the time of mind, thoughts grew in me until they were over my head, though they were its offspring; they hovered about me and shook me like the fever dreams, a horrifying power. The thoughts had become embodied for themselves, were ghosts, such as God, emperor, pope, fatherland, etc. If I destroy their embodiment, then I take them back into my own, and say: "I alone am embodied." And now I take the world as what it is to me, as mine, as my property: I relate everything to myself.

If as spirit I pushed the world away in the deepest contempt, as owner, I push spirits and thoughts away in their "vanity." They have no more power over me, as no "earthly force" has power over the spirit.

The child was realistic, involved with the things of this world, until bit by bit he succeeded in getting at what was behind these very things; the youth was idealistic, enthused by thoughts, until he worked his way up to being the man, the egoistic one, who deals with things and thoughts according to his heart's desire, and places his personal interest above everything. Finally, the old man? When I become one, there'll be time enough to talk about that.

1.2. Human Beings of Ancient and Modern Times

How each of us developed, what he strove for, attained, or missed, what objectives he once pursued and what plans and wishes his heart is set on for the moment, what changes his views have gone through, what shocks his principles have suffered, in short, how he came to be today what he was not yesterday or years ago—he brings this back out again with more or less ease from his memory and feels with particular vividness the changes that have gone on in himself when he has another's life unrolling before his eyes.

Let's look then into the activities which ensnared our ancestors.

1.2.1. The Ancients

Since tradition once gave our pre-Christian ancestors the name of "the ancients," we won't advance it against them that, in comparison with us experienced people, they actually should be called children, and instead still honor them as our fine ancients. But how have they come to be out of date, and who could edge them out with his alleged newness?

We are quite familiar with the revolutionary innovator and disrespectful heir, who himself profaned the Sabbath of the fathers to sanctify his Sunday, and interrupted the flow of time to begin a new era with himself; we know him and recognize that he is—the Christian. But does he stay forever young, and is he still the new one today, or will he also be surpassed, as he surpassed the "ancients"?

The ancients themselves were the ones who gave birth to the young one who carried them to the grave. So let's eavesdrop on this procreative act.

"To the ancients, the world was a truth," says Feuerbach, but he forgets to make the important addition: a truth whose untruth they tried to get behind, and finally actually did. It is easy to recognize what is meant by these words of Feuerbach, if they are placed alongside the Christian theorem of the "vanity and transience of the world." For, as the Christian can never convince himself of the vanity of the divine word, but believes in its eternal and unshakable truth, which, the more its depths are searched, has to come all the more brilliantly to light and triumph, so the ancients, for their part, lived in the feeling that the world and worldly circumstances (for example, the natural ties of blood) were the truth before which their powerless "I" must bow. The very thing on which the ancients placed the greatest value is discarded as useless by the Christian; and what the former recognized as truth, the latter brand as idle lies; the importance of the fatherland disappears, and the Christian must view himself as "a stranger on the earth"[7]; the sanctity of funeral rites, from which arose a work of art like Sophocles' *Antigone*, is referred to as something wretched ("let the dead bury their dead"); the inviolable truth of family ties is represented as an untruth from which one can't unchain oneself quickly enough;[8] and so on with everything.

Seeing now that the two sides consider opposite things to be truth, the one side the natural, the other the spiritual, the one side earthly things and relations, the other heavenly (the heavenly fatherland, the "Jerusalem that is above," etc.), it still remains to be seen how the new time and that undeniable reversal could arise out of antiquity. But the ancients themselves worked to make their truth a lie.

Let's plunge straight away into the midst of the most brilliant years of the ancients, into the century of Pericles. That's when sophistic culture proliferated, and Greece pursued as an amusement what had hitherto been a hugely serious matter to her.

The fathers had been enslaved by the power of unshaken existence for too long for the descendants not to have to learn from bitter experience to *feel themselves.* Thus, the *sophists,* with courageous impudence, speak the encouraging words "Don't be perplexed!" and

7 ▸ Hebrews 11:13.
8 ▸ Mark 10:29.

spread the enlightening teaching: "Use your reason, your wit, your mind, against everything; with good and practiced reasoning one gets on best in the world, prepares for himself the best lot, the most pleasant *life.*" They recognize in the mind the human being's real weapon against the world. This is why they so strongly hold to dialectical agility, language skills, the art of disputation, etc. They proclaim that the mind is to be used against everything; but they are still far from the sacredness of the mind, because they value it as a *means,* a weapon, just as cunning and defiance serve children for the same purpose; their mind is incorruptible *reason.*

Nowadays we would call this a one-sided intellectual education, and would add this admonition: "Don't just cultivate your intellect, but also, and especially, your heart." Socrates did the same. For if the heart was not freed from its natural impulses, but remained filled with the most random contents, and as an uncriticized covetousness, remained completely in the power of things, i.e., nothing but a vessel for various *appetites,* then it was inevitable that the free intellect would serve the "bad heart" and was ready to justify everything that the wicked heart desired.

Therefore Socrates said that it wasn't enough to use the intellect in all things, but it was important to know for which cause one was exerting it. We would now say: One must serve the "good cause." But to serve the good cause is—to be moral. Thus, Socrates is the founder of ethics.

Certainly the principle of sophistry had to lead to this, that the blindest and most dependent slave of his desires might still be an excellent sophist, and, with intellectual sharpness, lay out and prune everything in favor of his crude heart. What could there be for which one couldn't find a "good reason," and which one wouldn't let oneself struggle through?

Therefore, Socrates says: You must be "pure of heart," if one is to respect your wisdom. This is where the second period of Greek intellectual liberation begins, the period of *purity of heart.* The first came to its end with the sophists, because they proclaimed the omnipotence of reason. But the heart remained *worldly-minded,* remained a slave of the world, always affected by worldly desires. From now

on, this crude heart was to be molded: the era of the *education of the heart.* But how is the heart to be molded? What reason, that one side of the mind, achieved, namely the ability to play freely with and above all content, the heart also approaches this; everything *worldly* must come to shame before it so that finally one gives up family, community, fatherland, etc., for the heart, i.e., for *blessedness,* the blessedness of the heart.

Everyday experience confirms that one's reason may have long since renounced a thing, while the heart goes on beating for it for many years. So also sophistic reason had come to master the dominant, ancient powers so much, that they now only had to be driven from the heart, where they dwelt unmolested, to finally have no part left in humanity.

Socrates opened this war, and its peaceful end does not occur until the dying day of the old world.

The examination of the heart has its beginning with Socrates, and all the contents of the heart are inspected. In their last and most extreme efforts, the ancients threw all the content out of the heart, and didn't let it beat for anything: this was the act of the Skeptics. The same purity would be achieved for the heart in the skeptical age, as was achieved for reason in the sophistic age.

Sophistic education brought it to pass that one's reason won't *stand still* before anything, and skeptical education, that the heart won't be *moved* by anything.

As long as the human being is involved in the turmoil of life and entangled in relations to the world—and he is so up to the end of antiquity, because his heart still has to struggle for independence from the worldly—for so long he is not spirit; because spirit is bodiless, and has no relation to the world and physicality; the world and natural ties do not exist for it, but only the spiritual and spiritual ties. Therefore, the human being must first become so ruthless and reckless, so completely disconnected, as he is represented in skeptical education, so utterly indifferent to the world that its collapse would not touch him, before he can feel himself as worldless, i.e., as spirit. And this is the result of the vast effort of the ancients: that the human being knows himself as an essence without relations or world, as *spirit.*

Only now, after all worldly care has left him, is he all in all, only for himself, i.e., spirit for the spirit, or, more clearly, he cares only for the spiritual.

In the Christian wisdom of serpents and innocence of doves, the two sides of the ancient spiritual liberation are so perfected that they seem young and new again, and neither one lets itself be perplexed by the worldly and natural any more.

So the ancients also soared to *spirit,* and strove to become spiritual. But a person who wants to be active as a spirit is drawn to quite different tasks than he was able to set for himself before, to tasks which actually give the spirit something to do, and not just *sense* or *keen perception,* which only makes an effort to become the master *of things.* The spirit strives solely after the spiritual, and seeks in all things the "traces of spirit"; to the *believing* spirit, "everything comes from God," and interests him only insofar as it reveals this origin; to the philosophic spirit, everything appears with the stamp of reason, and only interests him insofar as he can discover reason, i.e., spiritual content, in it.

So the ancients did not exert the spirit, which has absolutely nothing to do with the unspiritual, with any *thing,* but only with the essence that exists behind and above things, with *thoughts,* for they didn't yet have it; no, they only struggled toward it, longed for it, and therefore sharpened it against their overpowering enemy, the world of sense (but wouldn't this still have been sensual for them, since Jehovah or the gods of the pagans were still a long way from the conception "God is *spirit,*" since the "heavenly" fatherland had not yet taken the place of the sensible one, etc.?); they sharpened their *sense,* their keen perception, against the world of sense. Even today, the Jews, those precocious children of antiquity, have not come further, and with all the subtlety and strength of wisdom and reason, through which they become the master of things with little difficulty, and force these things to serve them, cannot find *spirit,* which *makes nothing at all of things.*

The Christian has spiritual interests, because he allows himself to be a spiritual person; the Jew doesn't even understand these interests in their purity, because he doesn't let himself ascribe *no value* to

things. He doesn't achieve pure *spirituality,* a spirituality like the one religiously expressed, for example, in the *faith* of Christians, which alone justifies (without works). Their lack of spirituality forever sets Jews apart from Christians; for the spiritual is incomprehensible to the unspiritual, as the unspiritual is contemptible to the spiritual. But the Jews only have the "spirit of this world."

The ancient sharpness and depth of perception lies as far from the spirit and the spirituality of the Christian world as earth lies from heaven.

One who feels himself to be a free spirit does not get depressed or frightened by the things of this world, because he has no respect for them; if one still feels their burden, he must be narrow-minded enough to give them *weight,* as is evidently the case, when one is still concerned for his "dear life." The one for whom everything depends on knowing and conducting himself as a free spirit raises few questions about how wretchedly it fares with him, and doesn't think at all of the arrangements he has to make to have a thoroughly free or enjoyable *life.* The inconveniences of a life dependent on things doesn't disturb him, because he lives only spiritually and on spiritual food, but aside from this, almost without knowing it, he merely feeds or gulps things down, and when the food gives out on him, of course, dies bodily, but as spirit he knows he is immortal and closes his eyes with a devotion or thought. His life is preoccupation with the spirit, is—*thought;* the rest doesn't matter to him; if he may deal with the spiritual as he always can and wants, in devotion, in contemplation, in philosophical insight, his doing is always thinking; and thus Descartes, to whom this finally became clear, could put forth the proposition: "I think, therefore I am." Here it says, my thinking is my being or my life; only when I live spiritually do I live; I truly am only as spirit, or—I am spirit through and through and nothing but spirit. Unlucky Peter Schlemihl,[9] who lost his shadow, is the portrait of this person who's become spirit; because the spirit's body is shadowless. —In contrast, how different with the ancients! However

9 The central character of story about a man who sells his shadow to the devil for a bottomless wallet, only to find that a person without a shadow is shunned by everyone.

strong and manly they might act against the power of things, they still had to acknowledge the power itself, and got no further than protecting their *life* against it as well as possible. It was only later that they recognized that their "true life" was not the one they led in the struggle against the things of this world, but rather the "spiritual life"; when they "turned away" from these things, and saw them as they were, they become Christians, i.e., moderns and innovators against the ancients. But life turned away from things; spiritual life no longer draws any nourishment from nature, but rather "lives only on thoughts," and so is no longer "life," but—*thinking.*

But one shouldn't assume now that the ancients were *unthinking,* just as one shouldn't conceive of the most spiritual person as if he might be lifeless. Rather they had their thoughts about everything, about the world, human beings, the gods, etc., and proved themselves extremely active in bringing all this to their awareness. But they didn't know *thought,* even though they thought of all sorts of things and "were plagued by their thoughts." You can compare them with the Christian saying: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, as the heaven is higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts," and remember what was said about our child-thoughts.

So what was antiquity seeking? The true *enjoyment of life*, the pleasure of *living!* In the end it will prove to be "the true life."

The Greek poet Simonides sings: "Health is the noblest good for mortal man, the next after this is beauty, the third is wealth acquired honestly, the fourth the enjoyment of social pleasures in the company of young friends." These are all the *good things of life,* the joys of life. What else was Diogenes of Sinope looking for if not the true enjoyment of life, which he found in having the least possible wants? What else Aristippus, who found it in good spirits under every circumstance? They are seeking for cheerful, unclouded *courage to face life,* for *cheerfulness;* they are seeking to "be of good *cheer.*"

The Stoics want to realize the *sage,* the man with *life wisdom,* the man who *knows how to live,* therefore, a wise life; he finds him in contempt for the world, in life without development, without expansion, without friendly interactions with the world, i.e., in the *isolated life*, in life as life, not in life with others; only the Stoic *lives;* all else is dead for

him. The Epicureans, on the other hand, require a moving life.

Because they have a desire for good things, the ancients call for *good living* (Jews, in particular, for a long life, blessed with children and goods), for *eudaemonia*, for well-being in the most varying forms. Democritus, for example, praises as such "peace of mind," in which one "*lives* placidly, without fear and without excitement."

He thinks that with this he gets on best, provides the best lot for himself, and gets the best from the world. But since he can't get away from the world, and in fact can't do so for the very reason that all his activity rises from his endeavors to get away, therefore in *pushing the world away* (for which it is still necessary that what is to be pushed away and rejected continues to exist; otherwise there would be nothing more to push away); thus, at most, he reaches an extreme degree of liberation, differing from the less liberated only in degree. If he himself achieved the deadening of the earthly senses, which only allows the monotonous whispering of the word "Brahm," he would still not differ essentially from the sensual human being.

Even the Stoic attitude and manly virtue only go this far, that one has to maintain and assert oneself against the world; and the ethics of the Stoics (ethics was their only science, since they could tell nothing of the spirit except how it should behave toward the world, and nothing of nature [physics] except that the wise have to assert themselves against it) are not a teaching of the spirit, but only a teaching of disgust for the world and self-assertion against the world. And this consists in "imperturbability and equanimity of life," and so in the most explicit Roman virtue.

The Romans (Horace, Cicero, etc.) took it no further than this *life wisdom*.

The well-being (*hēdonē*) of the Epicureans is the same *life wisdom* the Stoics teach, only craftier, more deceitful. They only teach another *behavior* against the world, only admonish taking a cunning attitude against the world; the world must be deceived, because it is my enemy.

The break with the world is completely carried through by the *Skeptics*. My whole relationship to the world is "worthless and truthless." Timon says, "The feelings and thoughts we gather from the

world contain no truth." "What is truth?" Pilate cries. In Pyrrho's teaching, the world is neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly; rather these are *attributes* which I give to it. Timon says that, "in itself nothing is either good or bad, but the human being only thinks of it as this or that"; the only ways left for facing the world are *ataraxia* (imperturbability) and *aphasia* (becoming silent—or, in other words, isolated *inwardness*). There is "no more truth to be recognized" in the world; things contradict themselves; thoughts about things are undiscriminating (good and bad are all the same, so that what one calls good another finds bad); so knowledge of the "truth" has ended, and only the *person without knowledge,* the *person* who finds nothing to recognize in the world, remains, and this person just lets the truth-empty world be and takes no account of it.

So antiquity finishes with the world of things, with the world order, with the world as a whole; but it isn't just nature that belongs to the world order or to the things of this world, but all the relationships into which the human being feels that nature places him, e.g., the family, the community, in short the so-called "natural bonds." Then Christianity begins with the *world of the spirit*. The person who still stands *on guard* against the world is the *ancient,* the—*heathen* (to which the Jew too, as a non-Christian, belongs); the person who is guided by nothing except his "heart's desire," his sympathy, his compassion, his—*spirit*, is the modern, the—Christian.

As the ancients worked toward the *conquest of the world* and strove to release human beings from the heavy, entangling bands of relationship with *others,* so they came at last to the disintegration of the state and the preference for everything private. Communities, families, etc., as natural relationships, are tiresome inhibitions which curtail my *spiritual freedom.*

1.2.2. The Moderns

"If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature;* old things have passed away, behold, all has become *new*."[10]

Since it was said above, "for the ancients the world was a truth," we must say here, "for the moderns the spirit was a truth"; but here,

10 ▸ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

as there, we mustn't omit the addition: "a truth whose untruth they sought to get behind, and finally actually did."

A course similar to that which antiquity took can also be detected in Christianity, in that up to the time preparatory for the Reformation, *reason* was held prisoner under the rule of Christian dogmas, but in the century before the Reformation reason rose up *sophistically* and pursued a heretical game with all dogmas. Thus, it was then said, especially in Italy and at the Roman court: If only the heart remained Christian-minded, the reason may, in any case, enjoy its pleasures.

Long before the Reformation, people were so thoroughly accustomed to subtle squabbling that the pope and most others at first looked on Luther's appearance as mere "monkish squabbling." Humanism corresponds to sophistry, and as in the time of the sophists Greek life stood in its fullest bloom (the Periclean age), so the most brilliant things occurred in the time of humanism—or as one might also say, of Machiavellianism (the art of printing, the New World, etc.). The heart at this time was still far from wanting to rid itself of its Christian content.

But finally the Reformation, like Socrates, put the *heart* itself into action, and since then, the heart has become noticeably—more unchristian. Since with Luther people began to take the thing to heart, this step of the reformation would have to lead to this: that the heart would also be relieved of the heavy burden of Christianity. The heart, day by day more unchristian, loses the content with which it had occupied itself, until finally nothing is left to it but empty *warm-heartedness,* the thoroughly universal human kindness, the love of *humanity,* the consciousness of freedom, "self-consciousness."

Only in this way is Christianity finished, because it has become barren, dead, and void of content. There is now no more content against which the heart does not rebel, unless it has crept up on it unawares or without self-consciousness. The heart criticizes to death everything that wants to intrude with ruthless *heartlessness*, and is capable of no friendship, no love (except unconsciously or when taken by surprise). What would there be in human beings to love, since they all alike are egoists, none of them *the* human being as such, i.e., none *only spirit*. The Christian loves only the spirit; but where could

there be one who would actually be nothing but spirit?

To have love for the embodied human being with hide and hair, well, that would no longer be "spiritual" warm-heartedness; it would be a betrayal of "pure" warm-heartedness, of "theoretical concern." For one doesn't imagine pure warm-heartedness to be like that easy-going pleasantness which gives everyone a friendly handshake; on the contrary, pure warm-heartedness is warm-hearted to no one; it is only a theoretical concern, an interest in human beings as human beings, not as persons. The person is disgusting to it, because he is egoistic, because he is not this idea, the human being. But it has a theoretical interest only for the idea. For pure warm-heartedness or pure theory, human beings are only there to be criticized, mocked, and thoroughly despised; they are for them, no less than for the fanatical priests, only "filth" and other such fine things.

Pushed to the extremity of disinterested warm-heartedness, we must finally become aware that the spirit, which is all that the Christian loves, is nothing, or that the spirit is—a lie.

What has been insisted upon here, and mostly likely as yet dashed off incomprehensibly, will, I hope, become clear further on.

Let's take up the inheritance left to us by the ancients, and, as active workers, do with it as much as—can be done with it! The world lies despised at our feet, far beneath us and our heaven, into which her mighty arms no longer reach and her intoxicating scent does not penetrate. As seductive as she may act, she can bewitch nothing but our senses; she cannot lead our spirit astray—and after all, we are in truth only spirit. Once it had gotten *behind* things, the spirit also got *over* them, and became free from their bonds, emancipated, with an otherworldly freedom. So "spiritual freedom" speaks.

The spirit, which, after long efforts, has rid itself of the world, the worldless spirit, has nothing left after the loss of the world and the worldly except—the spirit and the spiritual.

But since it has only removed itself from the world and made of itself an essence *free of the world,* without actually being able to destroy it, the world remains an offense to it that can't be removed, a disreputable essence; and since, on the other hand, it knows and recognizes nothing but the spirit and the spiritual, it must constantly bring with

it the desire to spiritualize the world, i.e., to redeem it from the "shit pile." Therefore, it goes about like a young man with plans for the redemption or improvement of the world.

As we saw, the ancients served the natural, the worldly, the natural world order, but they incessantly wondered if they couldn't then relieve themselves of this service, and when they had grown dead tired in their ever-renewed endeavors at revolt, then, amidst their last sighs, there was born to them the *God,* the "overcomer of the world." All their activity had been nothing but *worldly wisdom,* a striving to get behind and over the world. And what is the wisdom of the many centuries that followed? What did the moderns try to get behind? No longer behind the world, since the ancients had achieved that; but rather behind the God which the ancients bequeathed to them, behind the God who is spirit, behind everything that is the spirit's, the spiritual. The activity of the spirit, which "investigates even the depths of the Godhead," is *the study of divinity*. If the ancients have nothing to show but worldly wisdom, so the moderns never took or take it further than theology. We will see later that even the newest revolts against God are nothing but the most extreme endeavors of "the study of divinity," i.e., theological insurrections.

1.2.2.1. The Spirit

The realm of the spirit is tremendously large, there is an endless amount of the spiritual; still, let's see what the spirit, this legacy from the ancients, really is.

It emerged from their birth pangs, but they could not express themselves as spirit; they could give birth to it, but it had to express itself. The "born God, the Son of Man" first spoke the Word that spirit, i.e., he, the God, has nothing to do with earthly things and earthly relationships, but only with the spirit and spiritual relationships.

Is my courage, indestructible under all the world's blows, my inflexibility and defiance, already spirit in the full sense, since the world cannot touch it? In this way it would still be at enmity with the world, and its activity would be limited to not being defeated by it! No, so long as it is not dealing with itself alone, so long as it does not have to do only with *its own* world, the spiritual, it is not *free* spirit, but only

"the spirit of this world," the one fettered to it. The spirit is free spirit, i.e., actual spirit, only in a world *of its own*; in "*this one,*" the earthly world, it is a stranger. Only in the midst of a spiritual world is the spirit actually spirit, because "this" world doesn't understand it and doesn't know how to keep "the girl from the foreign land" from leaving.

But where is this spiritual world supposed to come from? Nowhere else but from itself! It must reveal itself; and the words that it speaks, the revelations in which it unveils itself, these are *its* world. As a dreamer lives and has *his* world only in the fanciful patterns that he himself creates, as a fool generates his own dream world, without which he wouldn't even be able to be a fool, so spirit has to create its spirit world for itself and, until it creates this, is no spirit.

Thus its creations make it spirit, and in its creations one recognizes it, the creator: it lives in them, they are its world.

Now, what is the spirit? It is the creator of a spiritual world! Also in you and me one first recognizes spirit when he sees that we have appropriated something spiritual to ourselves, for example, thoughts; although they were perhaps presented to us, we have nonetheless brought them to life in ourselves; since as long as we were children one could have presented us with the most edifying thoughts without our wanting or being able to recreate them in ourselves. So also the spirit only exists when it creates the spiritual; it is only actual together with the spiritual, its creation.

Since we recognize it because of its works, the question is this: What are these works? But the works or children of the spirit are nothing other than—spirits.

If I had Jews before me, Jews of the true mettle, I would have to stop here and leave them standing before this mystery as they have remained standing before it, unbelieving and without knowledge, for almost two thousand years. But since you, my reader, are at least not a full-blooded Jew—for such a one won't go this far astray—we'll go a little bit further together until you too perhaps turn your back on me, because I'm laughing in your face.

If someone told you that you were wholly spirit, you would take hold of your body and not believe him, but would answer: "I probably *have* a spirit, but don't exist only as spirit, but rather as a human

being with a body." You would still distinguish *yourself* from "your spirit." "But," he replies, "it is your destiny to one day become a 'blessed spirit,' even if now you still go along in the shackles of the body, and however you may imagine the future appearance of this spirit of yours, this much is still certain, that you will take off your body in death and nonetheless keep yourself, i.e., your spirit, for all eternity; therefore, the spirit is what is eternal and true in you, and the body is only an earthly home, which you can leave and perhaps exchange for another."

Now you believe him! For the present, indeed, *you* are not just spirit, but one day, when you have to leave your mortal body, then you'll have to make do without a body, and this is why it is necessary that you take care and provide for your true *I* in time. "What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world but lost his soul?"[11]

But even granting that the doubts raised over the years against Christian beliefs have long since robbed you of your belief in the immortality of your spirit, you have still left one tenet unshaken, and you still cling without inhibitions to the one truth, that the spirit is your better part, and that the spiritual has greater claims on you than anything else. Despite your atheism, you come together with the believers in immortality in your zeal against *egoism*.

But whom do you imagine under the name of egoist? A human being who, instead of living an idea, i.e., a spiritual thing, and sacrificing his personal advantage to it, serves the latter. A good patriot, for example, brings his sacrifice to the altar of the fatherland; but it cannot be disputed that the fatherland is an idea, since for animals with no capacity for mind, or children who are still mindless, there is no fatherland and no patriotism. Now, if someone does not prove himself to be a good patriot, he betrays his egoism in relation to the fatherland. And so it goes in countless other cases: whoever makes use of a privilege in human society sins egoistically against the idea of equality; whoever exercises dominance is chastised as an egoist against the idea of freedom, etc.

So you despise the egoist because he neglects the spiritual in favor of the personal, and looks after himself, whereas you would like to see

11 Matthew 16:26.

him act from love for an idea. You differ from him in that you make the spirit—whereas he makes himself—the central point, or in that you divide your *I* in two and raise up your "true *I*," the spirit, as the master of the worthless remainder, whereas he wants to know nothing of this division, and pursues spiritual and material interests just *as it gives him pleasure.* Indeed, you think that you are striking out only against those who have no spiritual interests at all, but in fact you curse at everyone who doesn't see the spiritual interest as his "true and highest" interest. You carry your knightly service for this beauty so far as to claim that she is the only beauty in the world. You don't live for *yourself,* but for your *spirit* and what is the spirit's, i.e., ideas.

Since the spirit only exists while it creates the spiritual, let's look around us for its first creation. If it has first accomplished this, from then on a natural reproduction of creations follows, as according to the myth only the first human beings had to be created so that the rest of the race could reproduce itself. However, the first creation must arise "out of nothing," i.e., the spirit has nothing but itself for its realization, or rather, it doesn't have itself yet, but must create itself; its first creation is thus itself, the *spirit*. As mystical as this sounds, we nonetheless go through it as an everyday experience. Are you a thinking being before you think? When you create the first thought, you create yourself, the thinking being; because you don't think before you think a thought, i.e., have a thought. Isn't it your singing that makes you a singer, your speaking that makes you a speaking human being? Now, so too it is the producing of the spiritual that first makes you a spirit.

Meanwhile, as you distinguish *yourself* from the thinker, singer, and speaker, you no less distinguish yourself from the spirit, and very much feel that you are something other than spirit. But just as, in the thinking *I*, hearing and sight easily fade in the enthusiasm of thought, so spirit-enthusiasm has seized you, and now you long with all your might to become wholly spirit and to merge into spirit. The spirit is your *ideal*, the unattained, the other-worldly; spirit is the name of your God; "God is spirit."

You are a fanatic against everything that is not spirit, and therefore you rail fanatically against *yourself,* as you aren't rid of a non-spiritual

remainder. Instead of saying, "*I* am *more* than spirit," you contritely say, "I am less than spirit; and I can only think about spirit, pure spirit, or the spirit that is nothing but spirit, but am not this; and since I am not this, it is another, it exists as another, whom I call 'God.'"

It lies in the nature of the thing, that the spirit which is supposed to exist as pure spirit must be an other-worldly one, for, since I am not it, it can only exist *outside* of me; since a human being doesn't fully merge into spirit, then pure spirit, spirit as such, can only be outside of human beings, beyond the human world, not earthly, but heavenly.

Only from this conflict in which I and the spirit lie; only because I and spirit are not names for one and the same thing, but different names for entirely different things; only because I am not spirit and spirit is not I: only from this does one get the completely tautological explanation of the need for the spirit to live in the other world, i.e., to be God.

From this it also follows how thoroughly theological, i.e., based in the study of divinity, the liberation Feuerbach[12] strives to give us is. In particular, he says that we had only misjudged our own essence and therefore looked for it in the other world, but now, when we see that God is only our human essence, we have to again recognize it as our own and take it back from the other world into this one. Feuerbach names the God, who is spirit, "our essence." Can we put up with this, that "our essence" is brought into opposition with us and that we get split up into an essential and a non-essential *I*? Don't we move back again in this way into the unhappy misery of seeing ourselves exiled from ourselves?

What do we gain then, when, for a change, we install the divine that was outside us into ourselves? *Are we* that which is in us? As little as we are that which is outside us. I am as little my heart as I am my sweetheart, this "other *I*" of mine. Precisely because we are not the spirit that dwells in us, precisely for this reason we had to move it outside ourselves; it was not we, it did not come together as one with us, and therefore we could do nothing other than to think of it as existing outside of us, beyond us, in the other world.

With the strength of *desperation* Feuerbach grips the whole

12 ▸ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 2nd enlarged edition (Leipzig, 1843).

substance of Christianity—not to throw it away, no; to usurp it, to pull it, the long-awaited, ever-distant, with one last effort out of its heaven and keep it with him forever. Isn't that a grip of final desperation, a life-or-death grip, and isn't it at the same time the Christian longing and desire for the other world? The hero doesn't want to go into the other world, but rather to draw the other world into himself, and force it to become this world! And since then, doesn't all the world cry, with more or less consciousness, that "this world" is what matters, and heaven must come down to earth and be experienced here?

We will briefly set Feuerbach's theological view and our contradiction over against each other! "The essence of the human being is humanity's *highest essence;* now, of course, for religion, the highest essence is named *God* and is looked upon as an *objective* essence, but in truth it is only humanity's own essence, and therefore the turning point of world history is that from now on *God* should no longer appear to the human being as God, but rather the human being should appear as God."[13]

To this we reply: The highest essence may be the human essence, but precisely because it is his *essence* and not he himself, it doesn't matter at all whether we see it outside him and view it as God, or find it in him and call it "human essence" or "the human being." *I* am neither God nor *the* human being, neither the highest essence nor my essence, and so, on the whole, it doesn't matter whether I think of the essence as in me or outside of me. Indeed, we actually always think of the highest essence in both kinds of other-worldliness, the inner and the outer, at the same time; because God's spirit, in the Christian view, is also "our spirit" and "dwells in us."[14] It dwells in heaven and dwells in us; we poor things are just its "dwelling," and if Feuerbach destroys its heavenly dwelling and forces it to move, lock, stock and barrel, into us, then we, its earthly lodgings, will be very much overcrowded.

But after this digression, which, if we meant at all to go like

13 ▸ See, for example, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 402.

14 ▸ For example, Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 3:16; John 20:22, and innumerable other passa.

clockwork, we would have had to save for later pages to avoid repetition, we return to the spirit's first creation, the spirit itself.

The spirit is something other than I. But this other, what is it?

1.2.2.2. The Possessed

Have you ever seen a spirit? "No, not I, but my grandmother." You see, it's the same with me too; I myself haven't seen any, but they ran every which way between my grandmother's feet, and from trust in our grandmothers' honesty we believe in the existence of spirits.

But didn't we have grandfathers, and didn't they shrug their shoulders every time our grandmothers talked about their ghosts? Yes, those were unbelieving men who have damaged our good religion, those Enlightenment philosophers! We'll feel that! What would form the basis then for this warm belief in ghosts, if not the faith in "the existence of a spiritual essence in general," and isn't the latter itself disastrously shaken when one allows insolent rationalists to rattle the former? The Romantics thoroughly felt the blow the very belief in God suffered by the denial of the belief in spirits or ghosts, and sought to remedy the disastrous consequences not only through their reawakened fairy world, but finally, and particularly, through the "intrusion of a higher world," through their somnambulists, visionaries of Prevorst, etc. The good believers and church fathers did not realize that along with the belief in ghosts, religion would be deprived of its basis, and that since then it has been floating in the air. One who no longer believes in ghosts only needs to follow through consistently in his unbelief to see that there is no separate essence at all behind things, no ghost or—what is naively considered synonymous in our use of words—no "*spirit.*"

"Spirits exist!" Look around in the world and tell yourself whether a spirit doesn't look at you out of everything. From the lovely little flower speaks the voice of the creator, who has formed it so wonderfully; the stars proclaim the spirit who has placed them in order; the spirit of grandeur blows down from the mountaintops; a spirit of longing rushes up from the waters, and—from human beings millions of spirits speak. The mountains may cave in, the flowers

wither, the world of stars collapse, the human beings die—what does the downfall of these visible bodies matter? The spirit, the "invisible spirit," remains eternally!

Yes, the whole world is haunted! —Only *is* haunted? —No, it itself haunts, it is eerie through and through, it is the changing apparent-body of a spirit; it is a phantasm. What else is a ghost but an apparent body, but an actual spirit? Now the world is "vain," is "empty," is only dazzling "appearance"[15]; its truth is solely the spirit; it is the apparent-body of a spirit.

Look around near or far, a *ghostly* world surrounds you everywhere; you always have "apparitions" or visions. Everything that appears to you is only the appearance of an indwelling spirit, is a ghostly "phenomenon"; the world is to you only a "phenomenal world" behind which the spirit moves its essence. You "see spirits."

Are you perhaps thinking of comparing yourself to the ancients who saw gods everywhere? Gods, my dear modern, are not spirits; gods do not reduce the world to an appearance and do not spiritualize it.

But to you the whole world is spiritualized and has become a mysterious ghost; so don't be surprised if you also find nothing but a phantasm in yourself. Doesn't your spirit haunt your body, and isn't the former alone the true and the real, the latter only the "transitory, empty" or an "appearance"? Aren't we all ghosts, eerie essences, who await "deliverance"—that is to say, "spirits"?

Since the spirit appeared in the world, since "the Word became flesh," since then the world has been spiritualized, enchanted, a phantasm.

You have spirit, because you have thoughts. What are your thoughts? —Spiritual essences. —And so not things? —No, but the spirit of things, the main point of all things, their innermost aspect, their—idea. —So what you think is not just your thought? —On the contrary, it is the most real aspect, what is really true in the world; it is the truth itself; if I only truly think, I think the truth. Of course,

15 Over the next few paragraphs, Stirner is playing on the word "*Schein*" ("appearance" here). So "apparitions" is "*Erscheinungen,*" which in its singular form in the next sentence becomes "phenomenon." "Appears" is "*erscheint.*" The "phenomenal world" is the "*Erscheinungwelt,*" etc.

I can be mistaken about the truth and *fail to recognize* it; but when I *recognize* it, then the object of my knowledge is the truth.[16] —So do you strive at all times to recognize the truth? —The truth is sacred to me. It may well happen that I find a truth imperfect and replace it with a better one, but I cannot abandon *the* truth. I *believe* in the truth, therefore I search into it; nothing surpasses it, it is eternal.

The truth is sacred, eternal; it is the Sacred, the Eternal. But you, who let yourself be filled and led by this sacred thing, yourself become sanctified. Also, the sacred is not for your senses, and you never as a sensual being discover its trace, but rather through your faith or, more particularly still, through your *spirit*; because it is itself a spiritual thing, a spirit; it is spirit through the spirit.

The sacred in no way allows itself to be as easily gotten rid of as many who no longer take this "unseemly" word into their mouths presently claim. If even in a single respect I still get scolded as an "egoist," then the thought remains of another that I am supposed to serve more than myself, and which must be more important to me than everything; in short, something in which I would have to seek my true well-being, something "sacred."[17] If this sacred thing appears human, if it is the human itself, this does not take away its sacredness, but rather, at most, changes it from an unearthly to an earthly sacred thing, from a divine to a human one.

Sacred things exist only for the egoist who doesn't recognize himself, the *involuntary egoist*, for the one who is always out for his own, and yet does not consider himself the highest essence, who only serves himself and at the same time always thinks of serving a higher being, who knows nothing higher than himself and yet is crazy about something higher; in short, for the egoist who doesn't want to be an egoist, and degrades himself, i.e., fights his egoism, but at the same time degrades himself so that he will "be exalted," and thus gratify his egoism. Because he wants to stop being an egoist, he looks about in heaven and earth for higher beings that he can serve and sacrifice himself to; but however much he shakes and chastises himself, in the

16 There is a word play here on "*verkennen*" (misjudge, fail to recognize), "*erkennen*" (recognize, come to know) and "*Erkenntnis*" (knowledge).

17 A word play on "*Heil*" (well-being) and "*Heiliges*" (sacred thing).

end he does everything for his own sake, and the disreputable egoism never gives way in him. This is why I call him the involuntary egoist.

His effort and care to get away from himself are nothing but the misunderstood drive for self-dissolution. If you are bound to your last hour, if you must babble today because you babbled yesterday,[18] if you can't transform yourself in every instant, you feel yourself in slave's shackles and frozen. This is why, beyond each moment of your existence, a fresh moment of the future beckons to you, and developing yourself, you get away "from yourself," i.e., from your current self. As you are in each moment, you are your own creation, and now in this "creation," you don't want to lose yourself, the creator. You are yourself a higher essence than you are, and you outdo yourself. But that *you* are the one who is higher than you, i.e., that you are not mere creation, but likewise your own creator, this you fail to recognize as an involuntary egoist; and so the "higher essence" is for you—an alien thing. Every higher essence, like truth, humanity, etc., is an essence *over* us.

Alienation is a hallmark of the "sacred." In everything sacred, there is something "eerie," i.e., alien, in which we are not quite familiar and at home. What is sacred to me is *not my own*, and if the property of others, for example, were not sacred to me, I would look upon it as *mine* and would take it for myself when a good opportunity arose; or, on the other hand, if the Chinese emperor's face were sacred to me, it would remain alien to my eyes, and I would close them at its appearance.

Why is an irrefutable mathematical truth, which might even be called eternal in the ordinary sense of the word, not—sacred? Because it is not revealed, or it is not the revelation of a higher essence. When one only understands so-called religious truths as revealed, one goes very wrong, and completely underestimates the breadth of the concept "higher essence." The atheists carry on their mockery of the higher essence, which also gets worshiped under the name of the

18 ▸ "How the priests chime, how much care they give to it,
That people come and babble today as they did yesterday!
Don't scold the priests! They know human needs:
For how happy one is, babbling tomorrow just like today."
[Goethe, *Venetian Epigrams*]

"highest" or *être suprême*,[19] and trample one "proof of its existence" after another into the dust, without noticing that, out of a need for a higher essence, they only destroy the old one to make room for a new one. Isn't "the human being" a higher essence than an individual human being, and aren't the truths, rights, and ideas that arise from the concept of it supposed to be revered as revelations of this concept and—held as sacred? Because if one were to again abolish some truth that seemed to be manifested by this concept, this would only give evidence of a misunderstanding on our part, without in the least doing harm to the sacred concept itself or taking its sacredness from the truths that must rightly be seen as revelations of the same. *The* human being reaches beyond each individual human being, and though it is "his essence," it is in fact not *his* essence, which would instead be as unique as he, the individual himself, but rather a universal and "higher," indeed, for the atheists, "the highest essence." And as divine revelations were not written down by God's own hand, but were revealed through "the Lord's tools," so also the new highest essence doesn't write out its revelations itself, but lets the news reach us through "true human beings." Only the new essence in fact betrays itself as a more spiritual conception than the old God, because the latter was still pictured with a kind of full-bodiedness or form, whereas the new has retained an unclouded spirituality, and no special material body is attributed to it. Still, it does not lack embodiment, which even becomes still more seductive, because it looks more natural and worldly, and consists in nothing less than every bodily human being or simply in "humanity" or "all people." Thus, the phantasmicality of the spirit in an apparent-body has become quite solid and popular once again.

So the highest essence is holy, along with everything in which this highest essence reveals or will reveal itself; but those who recognize this highest essence together with its own, i.e., with the revelations of itself, are sanctified. The sacred in turn sanctifies its worshiper, who through worship becomes a sacred being himself, as likewise what he does is sacred: a sacred transformation, sacred thoughts and actions, writings and aspirations, etc.

The conflict over what is worshiped as the highest essence can only

19 "Supreme being," in French in the original.

be understood as meaningful, so long as the most embittered opponents concede to each other the main point, that there is a highest essence to which worship or service is due. If one smiles compassionately at the whole struggle over a highest essence, like a Christian, for example, at the war of words between a Shiite and a Sunni or a Brahman and a Buddhist, then the hypothesis of a highest essence is empty for him, and the conflict over it an idle game. So whether the one or the triune God, whether the Lutheran God or the *être suprême* or no God at all, but rather "the human being" may signify the highest essence, this makes no difference at all to the one who denies the highest essence itself, because in his eyes those servants of the highest essence are all together—pious people, the fiercest atheist no less than the most devout Christian.

So in the foremost place in the sacred stands the highest essence and the belief in this essence, our "holy faith."

1.2.2.2.1 The Phantasm

With ghosts we arrive in the spirit realm, the realm of *essences*.

What haunts the universe, and creates its mysterious "inconceivable" essence, is precisely the arcane phantasm that we call the highest essence. And to get to the bottom of this *phantasm*, to conceive it, to discover *actuality* in it (to prove "the existence of God")—this is the task human beings have set for themselves for thousands of years; the awful impossibility, the endless Danaid-labor,[20] of transforming the phantasm into a non-phantasm, the unreal into a real thing, the spirit into a complete and embodied person—they struggled away at this. Behind the existing world they sought the "thing in itself," the essence; behind the *thing* they sought the *absurdity*.[21]

When one looks to the *bottom* of a thing, i.e., investigates its *essence*, one often discovers something entirely different than what it *appears* to be: honey-sweet speech and a lying heart, pompous words and miserable thoughts, etc. By emphasizing the essence, one thus degrades the previously misjudged phenomenon[22] to a mere *appearance,*

20 A reference to King Danaus' daughters, who were punished in the afterlife with having to draw water from a well with perforated buckets for eternity.

21 In German, there is a wordplay on *Ding* (thing) and *Unding* (absurdity).

22 Here again Stirner is playing on "*Erscheinung*" (phenomenon) and "*Schein*" (appearance).

to a deception. The essence of the world, so attractive and marvelous, is for the one who sees through it—vanity; vanity is—world essence (world activity). Now, one who is religious doesn't deal with deceptive appearance, nor with vain phenomena, but rather looks into the essence, and in the essence has—the truth.

The essences which arise from certain phenomena are bad essences, and conversely those from others are good. The essence of human feelings, for example, is love; the essence of human will is the good; that of his thought, the truth, etc.

What was first taken for existence, such as the world and its like, now seems like mere appearance, and the *truly existent* is rather the essence, whose realm is filled with gods, spirits, demons, i.e., with good or bad essences. Only this inverted world, this world of essences, now truly exists. The human heart may be loveless, but its essence exists, the God "who is love"; human thought can wander into error, but its essence, truth, exists; "God is truth," etc.

To recognize and acknowledge only essences and nothing but essences, that is religion; its realm is a realm of essences, phantasms, and ghosts.

The urge to make the phantasm tangible, or to realize the *nonsense,* has brought about an *embodied ghost,* a ghost or spirit with an actual body, a full-bodied ghost. How the strongest, most brilliant Christians have martyred themselves to get a conception of this ghostly phenomenon! But there always remained the contradiction of the two natures, the divine and the human, i.e., the ghostly and the sensual; there remained the most wondrous phantasm, the absurdity. Never yet was a ghost more soul-torturing, and no shaman, who goads himself into a fury and nerve-racking convulsions to banish a ghost, can endure such anguish of the soul as Christians suffered from that most inconceivable ghost.

At the same time, only through Christ the truth of the thing had come to light, that the true spirit or ghost—is the human being. The *embodied* or full-bodied spirit is just the human being; he is himself the terrifying essence and at the same time the essence's appearance and existence or presence.[23] From now on the human being no lon-

23 "*Dasein.*"

ger trembles at ghosts outside himself, but at himself; he frightens himself. Deep in his breast dwells the *spirit of sin;* even the slightest thought (and this is itself a spirit) can be a *devil;* etc. —The ghost has put on a body, God has become a human being, but the human being is now himself the terrifying phantasm, which he tries to get behind, to banish, to fathom, to bring to actuality and speech: the human being is—*spirit.* Let the body wither, just so long as the spirit is saved: everything depends on the spirit, and the welfare of the spirit or "soul" becomes the sole focus. The human being has himself become a ghost, an eerie phantasm, to which a specific seat in the body is even assigned (though there is dispute over the seat of the soul, whether in the head, etc.).

You are not to me, and I am not to you, a higher essence. Nonetheless, a higher essence may be stuck in each of us, and call forth a mutual reverence. To immediately take the most general, the human being lives in you and me. If I didn't see the human being in you, what reason would I have to respect you? To be sure, you aren't the human being in his true and suitable figure, but only a mortal husk of his, from which he can withdraw without coming to an end; but still for now this general and higher essence dwells in you, and, since an imperishable spirit has assumed a perishable body in you, so that your figure is actually only an "assumed one," you bring to my mind a spirit that appears, appears in you, without being bound to your body and to this particular mode of appearance, thus a phantasm. This is why I don't look at you as a higher essence, but rather only respect that higher being that "haunts" you; I "respect the human being in you." The ancients disregarded any such thing in their slaves, and the higher essence, "the human being," still found little response. Instead they saw in each other ghosts of another sort. The people[24] is a higher essence than an individual and, like the human being or the human spirit, is a spirit haunting the individual: the spirit of the people. Therefore they revered this spirit, and only to the extent that he served this or some other spirit related to it, such as the family spirit, etc., could the individual appear significant; only for the sake of the higher essence, the people, was any value ceded to the "member of the people." Just

24 Of a specific nation or ethnicity.

as you are made sacred to us through "the human being" that haunts you, so individuals in every time were made sacred by some higher essence such as the people, the family, and so on. Only for the sake of a higher essence has anyone ever been honored, only being regarded as a ghost for a sanctified, i.e., protected and established, person. If I embrace and cherish you, because I have love for you, because my heart finds nourishment, and my need satisfaction, in you, it is not for the sake of the higher essence whose sanctified body you are, thus not because I see a ghost, i.e., an appearing spirit, in you, but out of egoistic pleasure: you yourself, with *your* essence, are of value to me, because your essence is not a higher one, not higher and more general than you; it is unique like you yourself, because it is you.

But it is not only the human being, but everything, that "haunts." The higher essence, the spirit, that haunts everything, is at the same time bound to nothing, and only—"appears" in it. A ghost in every corner!

Here would be the place to let the haunting spirits drift past, if they didn't have to come out again further on in order to vanish before egoism. Therefore, let's give only a few more notable examples of them, in order to immediately lead into our attitude toward them.

For example, above all, the "Holy Spirit" is sacred, the truth is sacred; right, law, the good cause, majesty, marriage, the common good, order, the fatherland, etc., etc., are sacred.

1.2.2.2.2. Bats in the Belfry

Man, your head is haunted; you have bats in your belfry![25] You're imagining big things and painting for yourself a whole world of gods that is there for you, a haunted realm to which you are called, an ideal that beckons to you. You have a fixed idea!

Do not think that I am joking or speaking figuratively when I look upon those who cling to something higher, and, since this includes

25 "*Du hast einen Sparren zu viel!*" would literally translate as "you have one too many rafters!", but it is a German figure of speech that means that you are crazy. Byington chose to translate it: "you have wheels in your head!", but I couldn't find evidence of that as an idiom for this purpose, so I have chosen to translate it: "You have bats in your belfry!", which like the German phrase implies having unnecessary and excessive things in your head.

the vast majority, almost the whole human world, as veritable fools, fools in a madhouse. What, then, is called a "fixed idea"? An idea that has subjected people to itself. When you recognize such a fixed idea as folly, you lock its slave up in an asylum. And the truth of the faith, which one is not to doubt; the majesty of the people, which one must not question (whoever does so is a—traitor to the crown); virtue, against which the censor must not let a word pass, so that morality will remain pure; aren't these "fixed ideas"? Isn't all the foolish chatter, for example, in most of our newspapers, the babble of fools, who suffer from the fixed ideas of morality, legality, Christianity, etc., and only appear to walk about freely because the madhouse in which they wander covers such a vast space? If you touch the fixed idea of such a fool, you will immediately have to guard your back against the lunatic's treachery. In this as well, these great lunatics are like the little so-called lunatics, in that they treacherously attack anyone who touches their fixed idea. First they steal his weapon, steal his free speech from him, and then they fall upon him with their nails. Every day now reveals the cowardice and vindictiveness of these madmen, and the stupid populace cheers on their great measures. One only has to read the daily papers of this period, and hear the philistines speak, to get the terrible conviction that one is locked in a house of fools. "You shall not call your brother a fool; if you do, etc...."[26] But I do not fear the curse, and I say my brothers are arch-fools. Whether a poor fool in the madhouse is possessed by the delusion that he is God the Father, Emperor of Japan, the Holy Spirit, etc., or whether a comfortable bourgeois imagines that it is his purpose to be a good Christian, a faithful Protestant, a loyal citizen, a virtuous person, etc.—in both cases, these are one and the same "fixed idea." Anyone who has never tried and dared not to be a good Christian, a faithful Protestant, a virtuous person, etc., is imprisoned and entangled by faith, virtue, etc. Just as the scholastics only philosophized *within* the faith of the Church; just as Pope Benedict XIV wrote huge tomes *within* the papist superstition, without ever calling this belief into question; just as authors fill whole volumes on the state without questioning the fixed idea of the state itself; just as our newspapers are filled with

26 A reference to Jesus words in Matthew 5:22.

politics because they are bewitched with the delusion that the human being was created to be a *zoon politicon*,[27] so also subjects vegetate in subjection, virtuous people in virtue, liberals in humanity, etc., without ever having put the sharp knife of critique to these fixed ideas of theirs. Unshakable,[28] like a madman's delusion, those thoughts are on firm footing, and anyone who doubts them—attacks the *sacred!* Yes, the "fixed idea": this is truly the sacred.

Do we only ever encounter those possessed by the devil, or do we just as often encounter those possessed by the opposite, possessed by the good, by virtue, by morality, by the law, or by any other "principle"? Possessions by the devil are not the only ones. God acts in us, and so does the devil; the former, "acts of grace," the latter, "acts of the devil." Possessed[29] people are *set* in their opinions.

If you don't like the word "possession," then call it prepossession; indeed, since the spirit possesses, and all "inspirations" come from it, call it—exaltation and enthusiasm. I add that complete enthusiasm—since one can't stop with the lazy and halfway sort—is called fanaticism.

Fanaticism is at home precisely among refined people; because the human being is refined to the extent to which he is interested in spiritual things, and an interest in spiritual things, when it is lively, is and must be *fanaticism;* it is a fanatical interest in the sacred (*fanum*).[30] Observe our liberals, look into *Die Sächsischen Vaterlandsblätter*, hear what Schlosser says:

> *Holbach's company constituted a literal plot against doctrine and the existing system, and the members were just as fanatical on behalf of their unbelief as monks and priests, Jesuits and Pietists, missionary and Bible societies are for mechanical worship and orthodoxy.*[31]

Pay attention to how a moral person behaves, who today often

27 A "political animal," a concept taken from Aristotle.

28 "*Unverrückbar*" can also translate as "absolute," a significant thing in light of the critique Stirner is developing.

29 Stirner makes a wordplay here on "*Besessene*" (possessed) and "*versessen*" (set).

30 Latin for a temple or other place consecrated to a deity.

31 ▸ Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, *Geschichte der achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und des neunzehnten bis zum Sturz des französischen Kaiserreichs. Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf geistige Bildung*, volume II (Heidelberg, 1837).

thinks that he is done with God and throws off Christianity as something spent. If you ask him whether he's ever doubted that copulation between siblings is incest, that monogamy is the truth of marriage, that filial piety is a sacred duty, etc., a moral shudder would come over him at the idea that one may touch his own sister also as a wife, etc. And whence this shudder? Because he *believes* in those moral commandments. This moral *faith* is deeply rooted in his chest. As much as he rails against *pious* Christians, he himself still remains as much a Christian, namely a *moral* Christian. In the form of morality, Christianity holds him captive, and indeed a captive under *faith.* Monogamy is supposed to be something sacred, and whoever lives in bigamy gets punished as a *criminal;* whoever commits incest suffers as a criminal. Those who are always shouting that religion should not be seen in the state, and that the Jew should be a citizen equally with the Christian, show themselves to be in agreement with this. Isn't this perspective on monogamy and incest a *dogma?* Touch it, and you will find out how this moral hero is also a *hero of faith,* despite a Krummacher, despite a Philip II. These fight for the faith of the church, he for the faith of the state, or the state's moral laws; for articles of faith, both condemn anyone who acts differently than what *their faith* will allow. The stigma of "crime" is stamped upon him, and he may languish in houses of correction, in prisons. Moral faith is as fanatical as religious faith! It is called "freedom of belief" then, when a brother and sister are thrown into prison for a relationship that they had settled with their own "conscience." "But they set a pernicious example." Yes, indeed, others could also come to think that the state does not have to interfere in their relationship, and from this "moral purity" would collapse. So the religious heroes of faith crusade for the "sacred God," the moral ones for the "sacred good."

The zealots for some sacred thing often don't look very much like each other. How the strict Orthodox or Old Believers differ from the fighters for "truth, light and justice," from the Philalethes, the Friends of Light, the Rationalists,[32] etc. And yet how utterly unessential this difference is! If one calls single traditional truths (for example, miracles,

32 These three terms all refer to more "progressive" or "rational" movements in the Christianity of Stirner's time.

the absolute princely power, etc.) into question, the Rationalists also call them into question, and only the Old Believers wail. But if one calls truth itself into question, he immediately has both, as *believers,* for opponents. So with moralities: strict believers are severe, clearer heads are more tolerant. But anyone who attacks morality itself gets to deal with both. "Truth, morality, right, light, etc." are supposed to be and remain "sacred." What one finds to reproach in Christianity is simply supposed to be "unchristian" in the view of these Rationalists; but Christianity must remain the pillar, and to call it into question is outrageous, it is an "outrage." To be sure, the heretic against pure faith is no longer exposed to the earlier fury of persecution, but now it is applied all the more to the heretic against pure morals.

For a century, piety has received so many blows, and has had to hear its superhuman essence berated as "inhuman" so often, that one can't feel tempted to expound against it again. And yet it has almost always only been moral opponents who have appeared in the arena to contest the highest essence in favor of—another highest essence. So Proudhon boldly says: "Humanity is destined to live without religion, but the moral law (*la loi morale*) is eternal and absolute. Who today would dare to attack morality?"[33] The moral people skimmed off the best fat from religion, enjoyed it themselves, and are now having a hard time getting rid of the resulting scrofula. So if we point out that religion is a long way from being hurt at its heart as long as one reproaches it only for its superhuman essence, and that it ultimately appeals to the "spirit" alone (for God is spirit), then we have sufficiently indicated its ultimate harmony with morality, and we can leave its stubborn battle with the latter behind us. It's a question of a supreme essence for both, and whether this is superhuman or human matters little to me since it is in any case an essence over me, an overmine one, so to speak. In the end the demeanor of the human essence or "humanity," as soon as it has shed the snake-skin of the old religion, will yet again wear a religious snake-skin.

So Feuerbach instructs us that, "if one only *reverses* speculative philosophy, i.e., always makes the predicate into the subject, and

33 ▸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité ou principes d'organisation politique* (Paris, 1843), p. 36.

so makes the subject into the object and principle, one has the undisguised, the pure, naked truth."[34] With this, indeed, we lose the narrow religious standpoint, lose *God,* who is the subject from this standpoint; but we only exchange it for the other side of the religious standpoint, the *moral* standpoint. For example, we no longer say "God is love," but rather "love is divine." If we further replace the predicate "divine" with the synonymous "sacred," then the matter returns again to all the old ways. According to this, love is supposed to be the *good* in the human being, his divinity, that which does him honor, his true *humanity* (it "makes him human for the first time," for the first time makes a human being out of him). So it would be said more precisely that love is the *human* in the human being; the inhuman is the loveless egoist. But everything that Christianity, along with speculative philosophy, i.e., theology, offers as the good, as the absolute, is, in self-ownership, simply not the good (or, to say the same thing, is *merely the good*). Therefore, by changing the predicate into the subject, the Christian *essence* (and indeed, the predicate contains the essence) is only more oppressively fixed. God and the divine would thus entwine themselves more inextricably with me. To expel God from his heaven and rob him of his "*transcendence*" cannot yet establish a claim to complete victory, if with this it is only chased into the human breast and endowed with indelible *immanence.* Now it is said: The divine is truly human!

The same people who oppose Christianity as the foundation of the state, i.e., who oppose the Christian state, don't get tired of repeating that morality is "the cornerstone of social life and of the state." As if the rule of morality were not completely a rule of the sacred, a "hierarchy."

So here one can mention the enlightening movement that, after theologians had long insisted that faith alone was able to grasp religious truths, that God only revealed himself to believers, etc., and therefore that only the heart, the feelings, the believing imagination were religious, burst out with the assertion that the "natural

34 ▸ Ludwig Feuerbach, "Preliminary Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy," cited from Arnold Ruge (ed.), *Anekdota zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik,* volume II (Zurich, 1843), p. 64.

understanding," human reason, was also able to recognize God. What else does this mean but that reason laid claim to being just as much a dreamer as the imagination? In this sense Reimarus wrote his *Noblest Truths of Natural Religion.*[35] It had to happen that the whole human being with all his abilities turned out to be religious; heart and soul, understanding and reason, feeling, knowledge and will, in short, everything in the human being appeared religious. Hegel has shown that philosophy itself is religious. And what today is not called religion? The "religion of love," the "religion of freedom," "political religion"; in short, every enthusiasm. So indeed it is, too.

Even today we use the Latin word "religion," which expresses the concept of *bondage*. Indeed, *we* remain bound, to the extent that religion occupies our inner self; but is the spirit also bound? On the contrary, it is free, it is the sole master, it is not our spirit, but absolute. So the correct affirmative translation of the word religion would be "*spiritual freedom!*" With anyone whose spirit is free, he is religious in the same way as anyone in whom the senses have free rein is called a sensual person. The spirit binds the former, desires the latter. Religion is thus bondage or *religio* in relation to me: I am bound; freedom in relation to the spirit: the spirit is free or has spiritual freedom. Many have experienced how bad it gets for *us* when desires pass through us free and unbridled; but that the free spirit, glorious spirituality, enthusiasm for spiritual pursuits, or whatever one may call this jewel in the most varied phrases, brings us into a still worse jam than even the wildest misbehavior. People don't want to notice this; nor can they notice it without consciously being an egoist.

Reimarus and all who have shown that also our reason, our heart, etc., lead to God, have shown in this way that we are possessed through and through. Certainly, they offended the theologians from whom they took the privilege of religious exaltation, but through this they conquered still more territory for religion and spiritual freedom. Because if the spirit is no longer confined to feeling or belief, but also, as understanding, reason and thought in general, belongs to itself, the spirit, and so also may take part in spiritual and heavenly truths

35 Hermann Samuel Reimarus was a German philosopher, deist, and Hebrew scholar who rejected miracles and revelation.

in the form of understanding, etc., then the whole spirit is concerned only with the spiritual, i.e., with itself, and so is free. Now we are so thoroughly religious that sworn-in jurors condemn us to death, and every policeman, as a good Christian, takes us to the slammer by "oath of office."

Morality could only come into conflict with piety anyway where thundering hatred of everything that looked like an "order" (ordinances, commandments, etc.) was given vent in revolt, and the personal "absolute lord" was mocked and persecuted; it could therefore achieve independence only through liberalism, whose first form acquired importance in world history as "bourgeois citizenship," and the actual religious authorities weakened (see "Liberalism" below). Because the principle of the morality that doesn't just go side-by-side with piety, but rather stands on its own two feet, no longer lies in divine commandments, but rather in the law of reason, from which the former, if they are to remain valid, must first await the authorization of their validity. In the law of reason, the human being determines himself out of himself, because "the human being" is rational, and those laws arise of necessity out of the "human essence." Piety and morality part company here: that the former makes God, and the latter makes the human being, the lawgiver.

From a certain standpoint of morality, one argues approximately this: Either the human being's sensuality drives him, and in following it, he is immoral, or he is driven by the good, which, when taken up into the will, is called moral conviction (conviction and partiality for the good); then he proves himself to be moral. From this point of view, for example, can Sand's act against Kotzebue be called immoral?[36] It most certainly was what people commonly understand as unselfish, to the same extent as (among other things) St. Crispin's robberies in favor of the poor. "He shouldn't have killed, for it is written, Thou shalt not kill!" So to serve the good, the welfare of the people, as Sand at least intended, or the welfare of the poor, like Crispin, is moral; but murder and theft are immoral; the aim moral, the means immoral. Why? "Because murder, assassination,

36 In 1819, Karl Ludwig Sand, a student radical, killed August von Kotzebue, a reactionary and a vocal opponent of liberalism.

is something absolutely wrong." When the guerrillas[37] drew their country's enemies into ravines and shot them down from the bushes, unseen, wasn't that assassination? Based on the principle of morality, which commands you to serve the good, you could only ask whether murder could never under any circumstance be a realization of the good, and would have to approve that murder which realized the good. You can't condemn Sand's deed at all; it was moral because it was in the service of the good, because it was unselfish. It was an act of punishment that the individual carried out, an—*execution* carried out at the risk of his own life. What else had his undertaking been in the end, but that he wanted to suppress writings with brute force? Aren't you familiar with the same procedure as a "legal" and sanctioned one? And what can you argue against it from your principle of morality?—"But it was an illegal execution." So the immoral aspect in this was the illegality, the disobedience to the law? So you admit that the good is nothing other than—the law, *morality* nothing other than *loyalty*. Your morality must also sink down to this outward appearance of "loyalty," to this sacred work of fulfillment of the law, except that the latter is both more tyrannical and more revolting than the old-time sacred work. Because this only required the *act*, but you require the *attitude* as well; one is supposed to carry the law, the statute, *within himself;* whoever is most legally-minded is the most moral. Even the final serenity of Catholic life must perish in Protestant legality. Here finally the rule of law is complete for the first time. "Not I live, but the law lives in me." So I have really come so far, only to be the "vessel of its (the law's) glory." "Every Prussian carries his gendarme in his breast," says a high Prussian officer.

Why don't certain *opposition movements* flourish? Merely for the reason that they don't want to leave the path of morality or legality. Thus, the excessive hypocrisy of devotion, love, etc., from whose repulsiveness one can daily get the most thorough disgust for this corrupt and hypocritical relationship of "legal opposition." —In the *moral* relationship of love and faithfulness a conflicting, an opposing will cannot occur; the lovely relationship is disturbed when one wills this

37 Most likely a reference to local militias in Spain fighting against Napoleon's invasion.

and the other wills the opposite. But now, according to the existing practice and the old prejudice of the opposition, the moral relationship is to be preserved above all. What then is left to the opposition? Perhaps this, the will to have a freedom, when the beloved decides to refuse it? By no means! It must not *will* to have a freedom, it can only *wish,* and thus petition, for it, mumble a "please, please!" What would come of it, if the opposition actually *willed,* willed with the full energy of the will? No, it must sacrifice *will,* to live through *love,* sacrifice freedom—for the love of morality. It must never "claim as a right" what it is only allowed to "request as a favor." Love, devotion, etc., require with inescapable determination that there will be only one will, to which the others devote themselves, which they serve, follow, love. Whether this will is considered reasonable or unreasonable, one acts morally in either case if one follows it, and immorally if one defies it. The will that orders censorship seems unreasonable to many; but in a land of censorship, one who keeps his book from the censors acts immorally, and one who submits it to them acts morally. If someone lays aside his moral judgment and sets up a secret press, for example, one would have to call him immoral, and unwise as well, if he let himself get caught; but would such a one claim to have a value in the eyes of the "moral"? Perhaps!—If he, in fact, imagined that he was serving a "higher morality."

The web of present-day hypocrisy is attached to the edges of two realms, between which our time swings back and forth, attaching its fine threads of deception and self-deception. No longer firm enough to serve morality without doubting of weakening, not yet reckless enough to live entirely through egoism, it dithers now toward one side and now toward the other in the spider-web of hypocrisy, and, paralyzed by the curse of *half-measures*, catches only stupid, wretched gnats. If one has dared once to make a "free" petition, one immediately waters it down again with loving assurances, and—*feigns resignation;* on the other hand, if one has had the nerve to fight back against the "free" petition with *moral* references to trust, the moral courage also immediately declines, and one assures the petitioner that they hear the free words with special pleasure, one—*feigns appreciation*. In short, one wants to have the one, but not do without

the other; one would like to have a *free will,* but would not for his life go without the *moral will.* Just get together with a servile loyalist, you liberals. You will sweeten every word of freedom with a gaze of the most loyal trust, and he will clothe his servility in the most flattering phrases of freedom. And then you go your separate ways, and he, like you, thinks, "I know you, fox!" He smells the devil in you as much as you do the gloomy, old Lord God in him.

A Nero is only a "bad" person in the eyes of the "good"; in my eyes he is only a *possessed* person, as are the good too. The good see in him an arch-villain, and relegate him to hell. Why did nothing hinder him in his arbitrary acts? Why did people put up with so much? Were the docile Romans, who let all of their wills be bound by such a tyrant, perhaps a hair better? In old Rome they would have immediately executed him, would never have become his slaves. But the contemporary "good" among the Romans only opposed moral demands to him, not their *wills;* they sighed that their emperor did not pay homage to morality like they did: they themselves remained "moral subjects" until one finally found the courage to abandon "moral, obedient subjection." And then these same "good Romans," who as "obedient subjects" had endured all the shame of a lack of will, cheered over the outrageous, immoral act of the rebel. So where in the "good" was the courage for revolution, which they now praised, after someone else had grasped it? The good couldn't have this courage, because a revolution, and even an insurrection, is always something "immoral," which one can only decide upon when one ceases to be "good" and becomes either "bad" or—neither of the two. Nero was no worse than his time, when one could only be one of the two, good or bad. His time had to judge him: he was bad, and indeed to the highest degree, not a milksop, but an arch-scoundrel. All moral people can only pass this judgment on him. Rogues, like him, are still living today, here and there, (see, for example, the memoirs of Ritter von Lang) in the midst of moral people. But it isn't comfortable living among them, since one is not sure of his life for a moment; but does one live any more comfortably among moral people? One is no more sure of his life there, it's just that one is hanged "in the legal way"—but at least one is sure of one's honor, and the national cockade flies away in a flash. The rough fist of morality treats the noble nature of egoism utterly ruthlessly.

"But still, you can't put a rogue and an honest man on the same level!" Now, no one does this more often than you judges of morals; yes, even more than that, you lock up an honest man who talks openly against the existing state constitution, against the sanctified institutions, etc., as a criminal, and you leave your portfolios and even more important things with a mischievous rogue. So in practice you have nothing to reproach me for. "But in theory!" Now, there I indeed put both on the same level as two opposite poles: namely both on the level of moral law. They have meaning only in the "moral" world, just as in the pre-Christian era, a law-abiding Jew and a law-breaking Jew had meaning and significance only with regard to the Jewish law; for it, before Jesus Christ, the Pharisee was no more than the "publican and sinner." So also before self-ownership, the moral Pharisee counts for as much as the immoral sinner.

Nero became very unpleasant through being possessed. But a self-owning person would not stupidly oppose the "sacred" to him, so as to whine when the tyrant doesn't pay attention to the sacred, but rather his will. How often the sacredness of the inalienable rights of man has been help up before their enemies, and some liberty or other proven and demonstrated to be a "sacred human right"! Those who do this deserve to be laughed at, as they actually are, if they did not truly still follow the path that leads to the goal, even if unconsciously. They have guessed that if only the majority is won over to that liberty, it will also will it, and will take what it *wills* to have. The sacredness of the liberty and every possible proof of this sacredness will never obtain it; whining and petition only show beggars.

The moral person is necessarily narrow-minded in that he knows no other enemy than the "immoral" person. "Whoever is not moral is immoral!", consequently degenerate, contemptible, etc. Therefore, the moralist can never understand the egoist. Isn't sexual intercourse outside of wedlock an immorality? The moral person may turn as he pleases, he will have to stand by this statement; Emilia Galotti[38] gave up her life for this moral truth. And it's true, it is an immorality.

38 Emilia Galotti is the heroine of a "domestic tragedy" of the same name by Lessing. When a prince kidnaps her with the intention of seducing, she convinces her father to kill her so that she can avoid this fate.

A virtuous girl may become an old maid; a virtuous man may pass the time grappling with his natural impulses until he has perhaps evaporated them, he may castrate himself for the sake of virtue as St. Origen did for the sake of heaven; he thereby honors sacred marriage, sacred chastity, as inviolable; he is—moral. Unchastity can never become a moral act. However leniently the moral person may judge and pardon the one who committed it, it is still an offense, a sin against the moral order, there is still an indelible stigma attached to it. As chastity once belonged to the monastic vow, so now it belongs to the moral way of life. Chastity is a—good. For the egoist, on the contrary, chastity likewise is not a good without which he could not get by; he couldn't care less about it. Now what follows from this for the moral person's judgment? This, that he throws the egoist into the only class of people that he knows other than moral people, into that of the—immoral people. He can do nothing else; he must find the egoist immoral in everything in which the egoist pays no regard to morality. If he didn't find him so, he would have already become an apostate to morality without admitting it, he would not longer be a truly moral person. Nevertheless, one should not let himself be led astray by such phenomena, which today certainly no longer belong among the rare, and remember that one who relents on any point of morality can as little be counted among the truly moral, since Lessing—who in the well-known parable compares the Christian religion, as well as the Muslim and Jewish religions, to a "counterfeit ring"—was a Christian. People are often already further than they dare to admit to themselves. Because in culture Socrates stood on the level of morality, it would have been an immorality if he had been willing to follow Criton's seductive advice and escape from the dungeon; staying was the only moral thing. But it was solely because Socrates was—a moral person. The "immoral, ruthless" men of the revolution, on the other hand, had sworn loyalty to Louis XVI, and decreed his ouster and indeed his death; but the act was an immoral one, at which moral people will be horrified for all eternity.

But all this, more or less, only hits on "bourgeois morality," on which the freer people look down with contempt. It is, to be exact, like its native ground, the bourgeois way of life in general, still too

little removed and free from the religious heaven not to transplant the laws of the latter without criticism or further considerations over here in its domain instead of generating its own independent teachings. Morality looks quite different when it achieves consciousness of dignity, and raises its principle, the human essence, or "humanity," to be the only authoritative power. Those who have worked their way through to such a resolute consciousness break completely with religion, whose God no longer finds any place beside its "humanity," and, as they scuttle the ship of state itself (see below), they also crumble the morality that thrives only in the state, and consistently shouldn't make further use even of its name. For what these "critical" ones call morality is quite conclusively distinguished from so-called "bourgeois or political morality," and must appear to the citizen as a "senseless and unbridled freedom." But basically, it only has the advantage of the "purity of principle," which, freed from its contamination by the religious, has come to omnipotence now in its refined determination as—"humanity." Therefore, one shouldn't wonder that the name "morality" is also retained alongside others, like freedom, humanitarianism, self-consciousness, etc., and will only occasionally be provided with the addition, a "free" morality—just as also, although the bourgeois state is disparaged, still the state is supposed to arise again as a "free state," or even if not in this way, still as a "free society."

Because this morality perfected into humanity has fully dealt with the religion out of which it historically developed, nothing prevents it from becoming a religion on its own account. Because a difference prevails between religion and morality only so long as our relationships with the human world are governed and sanctified by our relationship to a super-human essence, or as long as our doing is doing "for God's sake." But if it comes to this, that "to the human being the human is the highest essence," then this difference vanishes, and morality, removed from its subordinate position, is perfected into—religion. For then the higher essence that had up to now been subordinated to the highest essence has climbed to the absolute height, and we behave toward it as toward the highest essence, i.e., religiously. Morality and piety are now just as synonymous as in the beginning of Christianity, and it is only because the highest essence has become

something else that a sacred way of life is no longer called "sacred," but "human." If morality has conquered, then a complete—*change of masters* has occurred.

After the annihilation of faith, Feuerbach imagines entering into the supposedly safe harbor of *love*. "The first and highest law must be the love of man for man. *Homo homini Deus est*[39]—this is the supreme practical principle—this is the turning point of world history."[40] But actually only that God has changed, the *Deus*; the love has remained: there love for the superhuman God, here love for the human God, for *homo* as *Deus*. Thus, the human being is to me—sacred. And everything "truly human" is to me—sacred! "Marriage is sacred of itself. And so it is with all moral relationships. Friendship is and must be *sacred* for you, and property, and marriage, and the welfare of every human being, but sacred *in and of themselves*."[41] Don't we have the priest there again? Who is his God? *The* Human Being! What is the divine? The human! So the predicate[42] has indeed only changed into the subject, and, instead of the phrase "God is love," one says "love is divine"; instead of "God has become human," "the human being has become God," etc. It is just a new—*religion*. All moral relationships are ethical, are cultivated with moral sense, only where they count in themselves (without the religious consecration of the priest's blessing) as *religious*. Feuerbach's proposition—"Theology is anthropology"—only means "religion must be ethics, ethics alone is religion."

Altogether Feuerbach only brings about a transposition of subject and predicate, a preferential treatment of the latter. But, since he himself says: "love is not sacred (and has never been considered sacred by human beings) by being an attribute of God, but it is an attribute of God because it is divine in and of itself," thus, he could find that the fight against the attributes themselves, against love and all sacredness, must be opened. How could he hope to turn people

39 "The human being is God for the human being."

40 ▸ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 402.

41 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

42 In this passage, Stirner uses the word "*Prädikate*" which one can translate as "predicate," a grammatical term, or "attribute," a theological term. I have chosen to use both words to translate this German word in the passage, depending on context, but the reader should remember that in the German it is one word.

away from God, when he left them the divine? But if, as Feuerbach says, God himself has never been the main issue to them, but only his attributes, then he could have at least left them the bauble a bit longer, since the doll, the real kernel, nonetheless still remained. He also recognizes that with him it is "only about the destruction of an illusion"; but he thinks that it "has utterly ruinous effects on people, because even love, in itself the innermost, truest disposition, becomes, through religiosity, an insignificant, illusory one, since religious love only loves the human being for God's sake, thus only apparently loves the human being, but in truth loves only God."[43] Is this different with moral love? Does it love the human being, *this* human being, for *this* human being's sake, or for the sake of morality, for *the* human being's sake, and so—for *homo homini Deus*—for God's sake?

The belfry bat has a lot of other formal aspects, some of which it might be useful to briefly mention here.

Thus, *self-denial* is common to the holy along with the unholy, the pure and the impure. The impure person denies all "better feelings," all shame, even natural timidity, and follows only the desire that rules him. The pure person denies his natural relationship to the world ("denies the world") and follows only the "aspiration" that rules him. Driven by the thirst for money, the greedy person denies all warnings of the conscience, all feelings of honor, all gentleness and all compassion: he puts every consideration out of sight: the desire carries him away. The holy person desires in the same way. He makes himself the "laughing-stock of the world," is hard-hearted and "strictly righteous"; because the aspiration carries him away. As the unholy person denies *himself* before Mammon, so the holy person denies *himself* before God and the divine laws. We now live in a time when the shamelessness of the holy people is felt and revealed more and more every day, due to which it is at the same time forced to reveal itself, and lay itself bare, more and more as well. Haven't the shamelessness and stupidity of the reasons with which people counteract the "progress of the times" long exceeded all measure and all expectations? But it has to happen this way. The self-deniers must take the same path as holy

43 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

people as they do as unholy people; and as the latter sink little by little to the fullest measure of self-denying meanness and *lowness,* so the former must ascend to the most humiliating *loftiness.* The earthly Mammon and the heavenly God both demand exactly the same degree of—self-denial. The lowly, like the lofty, reach out for a "good," the former for the material good, the latter for the ideal, the so-called "highest good"; and in the end, both also complete each other again, since the "materially minded" person sacrifices everything to an ideal specter, his *vanity*, and the "spiritually minded" person to a material enjoyment, *good living.*

Those who call people to "altruism" believe that they are saying something quite uncommon. What do they understand by this? Probably something similar to what they understand by "self-denial." But who is this self that is supposed to be denied and to have no benefit? It seems that *you* yourself are supposed to be it. And for whose benefit do they recommend altruistic self-denial to you? Again for *your* good, except that you obtain your "true benefit" through altruism.

You are supposed to benefit *yourself*, and yet you are not to seek *your* benefit.

People regard the benefactor of humanity as altruistic: a Francke who founded an orphanage, an O'Connell who works tirelessly for his Irish people; but also the *fanatic*, who, like St. Boniface, risks his life for the conversion of the heathen, or, like Robespierre, sacrifices everything to virtue; like Körner, dies for God, king, and fatherland. Therefore, O'Connell's enemies, among others, try to attribute some selfishness or profit-seeking to him, for which the O'Connell fund seemed to give them a basis; because if they succeeded in casting suspicion on his "altruism," they would easily separate him from his followers.

But what more could they show than that O'Connell was working toward another *goal* than the professed one? But whether he aims to make money or to liberate the people, that he is striving for a goal, and indeed *his* goal, still remains certain; self-interest here as there, but his national self-interest would be good for *others too,* and so would be the *common* interest.

Now is altruism perhaps unreal and existent nowhere? On the

contrary, nothing is more common! One could even call it a fashion accessory of the civilized world, that people take to be so indispensable that, if it costs too much in solid substance, they will at least deck themselves out with its tinsel imitation and feign it. Where does altruism start? Precisely where a goal ceases to be *our* goal and our *property,* which, as owner, we can deal with as we like; where it becomes a fixed goal or a—fixed idea, where it begins to enthrall, enthuse, fanaticize us; in short, where it comes out as our dogmatism and becomes our—master. A person is not altruistic so long as he keeps the goal in his power; one becomes so only through that "Here I stand, I can do no other,"[44] the basic maxim of all the possessed; one becomes so, with a *sacred* goal, through the corresponding sacred zeal.

I am not altruistic so long as the goal remains my *own*, and instead of stooping to being the blind means of its fulfillment, I always leave it open to question. My zeal doesn't, therefore, have to be less than the most fanatical, but at the same time I remain frosty cold against it, unbelieving, and its most implacable enemy; I remain its *judge*, because I am its owner.

Altruism grows excessively rampant as far as possessed-ness extends, as much on the possessions by the devil as on those by a good spirit: there, vice, folly, etc.; here, humility, devotion, etc.

Where can one look without meeting victims of self-denial? There's a girl sitting across from me, who has perhaps been making bloody sacrifices to her soul for ten years already. A dead tired head droops over the voluptuous form, and pale cheeks betray the slow bleeding away of her youth. Poor child, how often have passions beaten at your heart, and the rich forces of youth demanded their right? When your head burrowed into the soft pillows, how awakening nature quivered through your limbs, blood swelled your veins, and fiery fantasies poured the radiance of lust into your eyes! Then the specter of the soul and its salvation appeared. You were frightened, your hands folded, your tormented eye turned its gaze upward, you—prayed. Nature's storms were silenced, quiet glided over the ocean of your desires. Slowly the weary eyelids sank over the life extinguished under them, the tension crept unnoticed from the exuberant limbs, the

44 Luther's statement at his trial before the Diet of Worms.

boisterous waves dried up in the heart, the folded hands themselves laid an exhausted weight on the unresisting bosom, one last faint sigh moaned itself away, and—*the soul was tranquil.* You fell asleep, to awaken in the morning to a new battle and a new—prayer. Now the habit of renunciation cools the heat of your desire, and the roses of your youth grow pale in the anemia of your salvation. The soul is saved, let the body perish! O Lais,[45] O Ninon,[46] you did so well to despise this pale virtue! One free grisette against thousands of virgins grown gray in virtue![47]

The fixed idea may also be perceived as "axiom," "principle," "standpoint," and the like. Archimedes asked for a standpoint *outside* the earth from which to move it. People continually sought for this standpoint, and everyone seized upon it as best he could. This alien standpoint is the *world of the spirit,* of ideas, thoughts, concepts, essences, etc.; it is *heaven*. Heaven is the "standpoint" from which the earth is moved, earthly activities monitored and—despised. To assure themselves of heaven, to firmly and eternally hold to the heavenly standpoint, how painfully and tirelessly humanity has struggled for this!

Thus, Christianity has aimed to redeem us from a life determined by nature, from desires as our driving force, and so has wanted the human being to not let himself be determined by his desires. It's

45 Perhaps a reference to Lais of Hyccara or to Lais of Corinth, both ancient Greek courtesans. There are stories that claim that when the philosopher Demosthenes approached her, Lais of Hyccara raised her price from 1000 drachmas for a night to 10,000 drachmas when she saw him; on the other hand, she supposedly offered her charms to Diogenes of Sinope (the cynic) for nothing. If true, it seems she had good taste.

46 Anne (Ninon) de l'Enclos was a 17th century courtesan, author and freethinker. She had many lovers and chose never to marry in order to retain her independence. She was open about her way of life and about her opinions on religion (she thought life would be better without it), and spent some time under lock and key for doing so. She was also known for her wit. A fine example: "Much more genius is needed to make love than to command armies."

47 This is a word play. Grisette originally referred to a cheap gray fabric and the dresses made from it. Since young working girls in France could only afford such fabric, the term began to be used for such girls. Eventually the connotation of being flirtatious and sexually playful and open was added to the meaning of this word. Thus, one girl wearing gray unencumbered by virtue against thousands turning gray because of their virtue.

not that *he* should have no desires, but that the desires should not have him, that they should not become *fixed,* untamable, indissoluble. Now, couldn't we apply what Christianity (religion) contrived against desires to aid its own precept that *spirit* (thoughts, conceptions, ideas, beliefs, etc.) should determine us—couldn't we require that the spirit, or the conception, the idea may also not determine us, not become fixed and inviolable or "sacred?" Then it would work out as the *dissolution of the spirit,* the dissolution of all thoughts, of all conceptions. As then we had to say, "We are indeed supposed to have desires, but the desires are not to have us," so now we say, "We are indeed supposed to have *spirit,* but spirit is not supposed to have us." If the latter seems to lack good sense, consider, for example, that for many a person a thought becomes a "maxim" so that he himself becomes its prisoner, so that he doesn't have the maxim, but rather it has him. And with the maxim, he again has a "firm standpoint." The doctrines of the catechism inadvertently become our *principles* and no longer tolerate rejection. Their thought, or spirit, has the sole power, and no objection of the "flesh" is heard any more. Nevertheless, I can only break the tyranny of the spirit through the "flesh"; because it's only when a person also perceives his flesh that he perceives himself completely, and it is only when he perceives *himself* completely that he is a perceiving or reasonable being. The Christian doesn't perceive the misery of his enslaved nature, but lives in "humility"; he therefore doesn't grumble against the hardships that befall his *person;* he believes himself to be satisfied with "freedom of the spirit." But once the flesh makes itself heard, and its tone is "passionate," "rude," "not well-intentioned," "spiteful," etc., as it cannot be otherwise, then he believes he hears devils' voices, voices *against the spirit* (because good manners, passionlessness, good intentions and the like are precisely—spirit), and rightly rails against them. He would have to not be a Christian, if he wanted to tolerate them. He listens only to morality and slaps immorality in the mouth; he listens only to legality and gags the lawless word. The *spirit* of morality and legality holds him captive; a rigid, unbending *master.* They call that the "rule of the spirit"—it is at the same time the *standpoint* of the spirit.

And now whom do the usual liberal gentlemen want to set free?

Whose freedom do they cry out and thirst for? The *spirit's*. The spirit of morality, legality, piety, the fear of God, etc. The anti-liberal gentlemen also want that, and the whole dispute between the two turns on the advantage, whether the latter alone should have a say, or the former should receive a "share in the enjoyment of the same advantage." For both, the *spirit* remains the absolute *master*, and they only quarrel over who should occupy the hierarchical throne to which the "Lord's appointed governor" is entitled. The best of it is that one can watch the goings-on, calm in the certainty that the wild beasts of history will tear each other to pieces, as is their nature. Their decomposing carcasses fertilize the soil for—our crops.

We'll come back later to many other belfry bats, like those of the calling, truthfulness, love, etc.

When one's own is contrasted with what is *imparted,* you take away nothing with the objection that we cannot have anything isolated, but receive everything in global connection, therefore through the impression of what is around us, and thus have it as something "imparted"; because there is a great gap between the feelings and thoughts that are *aroused* in me by something else, and those which are *given* to me. God, immortality, freedom, humanity, etc., get impressed on us from childhood as thoughts and feelings that move our inner being more or less strongly, and either rule us without our knowing, or in richer natures can demonstrate themselves through systems and works of art, but are always not aroused, but imparted feelings, because we must believe in them and hang on to them. That an absolute existed and that we had to take in, feel and think this absolute, was established as a faith by those who devoted all the force of their mind to recognizing and depicting it. The *feeling* for the absolute exists then as an imparted one, and henceforth brings only the most diverse revelations of itself. So in Klopstock[48] the religious feeling was an imparted one, which he only expressed artistically in *Der Messias*. On the other hand, if the religion that he discovered had been only a stimulus to feeling and thought, and if he had known how to completely oppose *his own* to it, then, instead of religious enthusiasm, it would have resulted in a dissolution and consumption of

48 Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803): German poet and writer.

the object. Instead he sustained in mature years his childish feelings received in childhood and squandered the forces of his manhood in sprucing up his childish nonsense.

So the difference is whether feelings are imparted to me or only aroused in me. The latter are my own, egoistic, because *as feelings* they don't get stamped into me, recited to me, imposed on me; but I open myself to the former, foster them in myself as a heritage, cultivate them, and am possessed by them. Who would never have noticed, more or less consciously, that our entire upbringing is aimed at producing *feelings* in us, i.e., imparting them to us, instead of leaving the production to ourselves however they may turn out? When we hear God's name, we're supposed to feel the fear of God; when we hear that of the prince's majesty, he's supposed to be received with awe, deference, submission; when we hear that of morality, we are supposed to think we hear something inviolable; when we hear that of the Evil One or evil ones, we are supposed to shudder . . . and so on. If there are those who abandon these *feelings,* and who, for example, hear the actions of "evil people" with pleasure, they would have to be "chastised and educated" with the rod. Thus stuffed with *imparted feelings,* we appear at the gates of maturity and are "declared of age." Our equipment consists of "elevated feelings, lofty thoughts, inspiring precepts, eternal principles," etc. Young people are mature then when they twitter like the old; they get rushed through school to learn the same old song, and, when they have taken this in, they are declared of age.

We *are not allowed* to feel what we could and would like to feel at the time toward everything and every name that occurs to us; for example, toward God's name we are allowed to think of nothing comical, to feel nothing disrespectful, but rather it is prescribed and imparted to us what and how we should feel and think in this instance.

This is the meaning of *spiritual guidance,*[49] that my soul or my spirit would be tuned as others think right, not as I myself would like

49 This term is a specific reference to guidance or counseling offered by a pastor, priest, or minister in a church. There are several terms that would work here. I chose the one used in the church my parents took me to as a child.

it. How much effort does it not cost one to at least ensure oneself a feeling of one's *own* about one name or another, and to laugh in the face of many who expect from us a holy face and an ungrinning expression at their speeches. What is imparted is *alien* to us, is not our own, and therefore it is "sacred," and it's a heavy thing to cast aside the "sacred awe before it."

Nowadays we hear again the praise of "seriousness," "seriousness about highly important topics and debates," "German seriousness," etc. This kind of seriousness clearly expresses how old and serious lunacy and possessedness have already become. Because there's nothing more serious than a lunatic when he comes to the core of his lunacy; then due to his great zeal he cannot take a joke. (See madhouses.)

1.2.3 The Hierarchy

I'm not giving the historical reflections on our Mongolism, which I will occasionally insert at this point, with the claim of thoroughness or even merely of reliability, but solely because it seems to me that they could contribute to making the rest clear.

The history of the world, whose structuring in fact belongs entirely to the Caucasian race, seems to have gone through two Caucasian world ages up to now, in the first of which we had to work out and work off our innate *Negroidity*, which was followed in the second by *Mongoloidity* (Chineseness), to which likewise a horrifying end must be made. Negroidity represents *antiquity*, the time of dependence on *things* (on rooster feeding, bird's flight, on sneezing, on thunder and lightning, on the rustling of sacred trees, etc.); Mongoloidity represents the time of dependence on thoughts, the *Christian* time. These words are reserved for the future: "I am owner of the world of things, and I am owner of the world of spirit."

In the Negroid world age the campaigns of Sesostris[50] and the greatness of Egypt and North Africa in general took place. The Hun and Mongolian invasions, up to the Russians, belong to the Mongolian world age.

My worth cannot possibly be estimated highly so long as the hard

50 Three Egyptian Pharaohs had this name in the 19th and 20th Century BCE, the third of whom apparently led a campaign to conquer parts of Europe and Asia.

diamond of the *not-I* has such an enormous price, as was the case with both God and the world. The *not-I* is still too gritty and indomitable to be consumed and absorbed by me; instead people only crawl about with extraordinary *busyness* on this *immovable* entity, on the *substance*, like parasitic animals on a body from whose juices they draw nourishment, but without consuming it. It is the busyness of vermin, the active nature of Mongols. Among the Chinese, indeed, everything remains as of old, and nothing "essential" or "substantial" is subject to change; they work all the more actively on what remains, which bears the name of the "elderly," "ancestors," etc.

Consequently, in our Mongolian world age all change has been only reformatory or corrective, not destructive or consuming and annihilating. The substance, the object, *remains*. All our busyness was only the activity of ants and the jumping of fleas, juggler's tricks on the immovable tight-rope of the objective, forced labor under the rule of the immutable or "eternal," The Chinese are most likely the most *positive* people, because totally buried in statutes; but the Christian world age has also not come out from the *positive*, i.e., from "restricted freedom," freedom "within certain limits." At the most advanced level of education, this activity earns the name of *scientific* activity, as work on an unmoving premise, an irrefutable *hypothesis*.

In its first and most incomprehensible form morality presents itself as *habit*. Acting according to the custom[51] and habit of one's country—is to be moral there. That is why pure moral action, sincere, genuine morality, is practiced most plainly in China; they stick to the old habit and custom and hate every innovation as a crime worthy of death. Because *innovation* is the mortal enemy of *habit,* of the *old,* of *permanence.* In fact, it is also not open to any doubt that the human being, through habit, secures himself against the intrusiveness of things, of the world, and establishes his own world in which he alone is and feels at home, i.e., builds himself a *heaven.* Indeed, heaven has no other meaning than this: that it is the true home of the human being, in which nothing alien any longer determines and rules him, no earthly influence any longer alienates him from himself; in short, in

51 Throughout this passage, "morality" is "*Sittlichkeit*," "custom" "*Sitte*," and "moral" "*sittlich*."

which the dross of earthly things is thrown off and the struggle against the world has come to an end; thus, in which nothing is any longer *denied* him. Heaven is the end of *renunciation,* it is *free enjoyment.* There the human being no longer denies himself anything, because nothing is any longer alien and hostile to him. But now habit is an "other nature," which removes and releases human beings from their first and original natural condition, in that it secures them against all of its contingencies. The constructed habit of the Chinese has provided for all occurrences, and everything is "planned"; whatever happens, the Chinese person always knows how he has to behave, and he doesn't first need to decide for himself according to the circumstances: no unforeseen event throws him down from the heaven of his rest. The morally acclimated and settled Chinese person is not surprised and caught off guard; he behaves with equanimity, i.e., with equal heart or temper, toward everything, because his temper, protected by the caution of his ancestral custom, doesn't lose its composure. Thus, on the ladder of culture or civilization, humanity mounts the first rung through habit; and it imagines that, in climbing to civilization, it is at the same time climbing to heaven, the realm of civilization or second nature, so it is really mounting the first rung of the—ladder to heaven.

If Mongolism has established the existence of spiritual essences, has created a spirit world, a heaven, the Caucasians have wrestled for thousands of years with these spiritual essences, in order to get to the bottom[52] of them. What else did they do then but build on Mongolian foundations[53]? They haven't built on sand, but in the air; they have wrestled with Mongolian things, stormed the Mongolian heaven, Tian. When will they finally destroy this heaven? When will they finally become *actual Caucasians,* and find themselves? When will the "immortality of the soul," which believed itself more secure in these latter days if it presented itself as the "immortality of the spirit," finally change to the *mortality of the spirit?*

If in the industrious struggle of the Mongolian race, people had *built a heaven,* those of the Caucasian tribe, so long as they in their

52 "*Grund.*"
53 "*Grund.*"

Mongolian tone have to do with heaven, took up the opposite task, the task of storming that heaven of custom, *heaven-storming* activity. To undermine all human regulation, in order to create a new and—better one on the cleared site, to ruin all customs in order to put new and—better customs in their place, etc.; their activity is limited to this. But is it then already purely and actually what it strives to be, and does it reach its final goal? No, in this creation of something "*better,*" it is still afflicted with Mongolism. It storms heaven only to make a heaven again, it overthrows an old power only to legitimate a new power, it only—*improves.* Nonetheless, the target, as often as it may vanish from before the eyes at every new approach, is the actual, complete downfall of heaven, customs, etc., in short, of human beings secured only against the world, of the *isolation* or *inwardness* of the human being. Through the heaven of civilization, the human being seeks to isolate himself from the world, to break its hostile power. But this heavenly isolation must also be broken, and the true end of heaven-storming is the—downfall of heaven, the destruction of heaven. *Improving* and *reforming* is the Mongolism of the Caucasian, because through them he again sets up what was already there before, namely, a *precept,* a universal, a heaven. He harbors the most irreconcilable hostility toward heaven, and yet builds a new heaven daily: piling heaven upon heaven, he only crushes one with another; the Jewish heaven destroyed the Greek heaven, the Christian heaven destroyed the Jewish heaven, the Protestant heaven destroyed the Catholic heaven, etc. —If the heaven-storming people of Caucasian blood throw off their Mongolian skin, they will bury the sentimentalist under the ruins of the immense world of sentimentality, the isolated person under his isolated world, the glorified person under his heaven. And heaven is the *spirit realm*, the realm of *spiritual freedom.*

The heavenly realm, the realm of spirits and ghosts, has found its proper system in speculative philosophy. Here it was expressed as the realm of thoughts, concepts and ideas; heaven is populated with thoughts and ideas, and this "spiritual realm" is then the true reality.

To want to gain freedom of the *spirit* is Mongolism, spiritual freedom is Mongolian freedom, sentimental freedom, moral freedom, ethical freedom, etc.

People may take the word "morality" as synonymous with self-activity, self-determination. But that is not in it, and the Caucasian has rather shown himself self-acting only *despite* his Mongolian morality. The Mongolian heaven, or custom, remained the mighty fortress,[54] and only by ceaselessly storming this fortress did the Caucasian prove himself moral; if he'd had no more to do with custom at all, if he hadn't had it as his indomitable, continual enemy, then the relation to custom would end, and therefore also to morality. That his self-activity is still a moral self-activity is just the Mongolian-ness of it, is a sign that he has not come to himself in it. "Moral self-activity" corresponds entirely to "religious and orthodox philosophy," "constitutional monarchy," "the Christian state," "freedom within certain limits," "limited freedom of the press," or, in a picture, to the hero tied to a sick-bed.

The human being has only actually overcome shamanism and its phantasms when he possesses the strength to lay aside not only the belief in ghosts but also the belief in the spirit, not only supernatural belief, but spiritual belief.[55]

The person who believes in a phantasm no more assumes the "intrusion of a higher world" than the one who believes in the spirit, and both seek behind the sensual world an extrasensory one; in short, they generate and believe in *another* world, and this other *world, the product of their mind*, is a spiritual world; indeed, their senses grasp and know nothing of another, non-sensual world, only their mind lives in it. Progressing from this Mongolian belief in the *existence of spiritual essences* to where the *genuine essence* of the human being is also his *spirit*, and that all care should be directed toward this alone, toward the "salvation of his soul," is not hard. With this, the effect on the spirit, so-called "moral influence," is assured.

Thus, it is blatantly obvious that Mongolism represents the complete lack of rights of sensory nature, represents non-sensory nature,

54 I have chosen this translation, because I assume that Stirner is making a reference to Martin Luther's hymn "*Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott*," which was translated into English as "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

55 Here, "belief in ghosts" is "*Gespensterglauben*"; "belief in the spirit" is "*Glauben an den Geist*"; "supernatural belief" is "*Geisterglauben*"; and "spiritual belief" is "*Geistesglauben.*"

the unnatural, and that sin and the consciousness of sin was our millennia-long Mongolian plague.

But who will dissolve the spirit into its *nothing?* He who by means of the spirit portrayed nature as the *null,* finite, ephemeral; he alone can also bring the spirit down to the same nullity: *I* can do it, any one of you, who prevails and creates as a sovereign I, can do it; in a word, the—*egoist* can do it.

Before the sacred, people lose all sense of power and all courage; they behave *powerlessly* and *humbly*[56] toward it. And yet nothing is sacred through itself, but through my *beatification*, my judgment, my decision, my bending the knee; in short, through my—conscience.

Everything that is supposed to be, for the egoist, unapproachable, untouchable, outside his *power,* i.e., over *him,* is sacred; in short, every *matter of conscience* is sacred, because "This is a matter of conscience to me" simply means "I hold this sacred."

For little children, as for animals, there is nothing sacred, because, in order to make room for this conception, one has to have already come so far in his understanding that he can make distinctions like: "good and evil," "justifiable and unjustifiable," etc.; only by such a degree of reflection or reasonableness—the genuine standpoint of religion—can unnatural (i.e., brought into existence by thinking) *reverence,* "sacred awe," take the place of natural fear. Considering anything outside oneself to be more powerful, greater, more justifiable, better, etc., i.e., respecting the power of something alien, not merely feeling it, but expressly respecting it—i.e., conceding it, yielding to it, surrendering to it, letting oneself be bound to it (devotion, humility, servility, submission, etc.)—belongs to this sacred awe. Here the whole ghostly host of "Christian virtues" haunts.

Everything for which you harbor any respect or reverence deserves the name of sacred; you yourselves also say that you would feel a "*sacred awe*" of touching it. And you even give this tint to the unholy (gallows, crime, etc.). You dread touching it. There is something uncanny, i.e., unfamiliar or *not your own,* about it.

"If something didn't count as sacred for people, indeed the floodgates

56 "Courage" is "*Mut*"; "humbly" is "*demütig.*"

would open to willfulness, to boundless subjectivity!" Fear[57] makes the beginning, and one can make oneself fearful to the rudest people; so already they are a dam against one's impudence. But in fear there is always still the attempt to free oneself from what is feared through cunning, deceit, catcalls,[58] etc. In contrast, it's another thing altogether with reverence. Here something is not only feared but also honored: what is feared has become an inner power that I can no longer get away from; I honor it, am captured by it, devoted to it, and belong to it; through the honor that I pay it, I am completely in its power and no longer even attempt freeing myself. Now I cling to it with all the strength of belief; I *believe*. I and what I fear are one; "not I live, but the respected lives in me!"[59] Because the spirit, the infinite, doesn't allow for coming to an end, it is therefore stationary; it's afraid of dying, it can't let go of its baby Jesus, its blinded eye can no longer recognize the greatness of the finite; the object of fear, now raised to reverence, must no longer be touched; reverence is immortalized, the respected is deified. The human being is now no longer creating, but *learning* (knowing, inquiring, etc.), i.e., occupied with a fixed *object,* engrossing himself in it, without coming back to himself. The relationship with the object is that of knowledge, discovery, validation, etc., not that of *dissolution* (abolition, etc.). "The human being is supposed to be religious," that's for sure; therefore people only deal with the question of how to achieve this, what is the correct meaning of religiosity, etc. Something else occurs altogether when one makes the axiom itself doubtful and calls it into question, and it should also collapse in a heap. Morality is also such a sacred conception; one must be moral, and must seek out the right method, the right way to be so. One doesn't dare to go at morality itself with the question of whether it isn't itself a delusion; it continues to be elevated above all doubt, unchangeable. And so it goes on with the sacred,

57 In the passage that follows, Stirner uses a bit of wordplay to make his point: "*Furcht*" (fear), "*Ehrfurcht*" (reverence), "*gefürchtet*" (feared) and "*geehrt*" (honored).

58 The German word "*Pfiff*" can have several meanings, two of which could have fit here: catcalls—in other words mocking what scares one; and pizzazz—using one's moxie or glamor to show up what scares one. I chose the former, but it was a purely *willful* choice.

59 A reference to Galatians 2:20.

step by step, from the "holy" to the "holy of holies."

Sometimes people divide human beings into two classes, the *cultured* and the *uncultured*. The former, insofar as they are worthy of the name, concerned themselves with thoughts, with the spirit, and because they were the rulers in the time after Christ, in which the principle is thought, they demanded a servile respect for the thoughts that they recognized. State, emperor, God, morality, order, etc., are such thoughts or spirits, which are only for the mind. A mere living being, an animal, cares as little for them as a child. But the uncultured are actually nothing but children, and anyone who only dwells on his life's needs is indifferent to those spirits; but because he is also weak before them, he is subject to their power, and is ruled by—thoughts. This is the meaning of hierarchy.

Hierarchy is the rule of thoughts, the rule of the spirit!

We are hierarchical to the present day, put down by those who are backed up by thoughts. Thoughts are the sacred.

But the two are always clashing with each other, the cultured against the uncultured and vice versa, and indeed attacking each other not just in two people, but in one and the same person. Because no cultured person is so cultured that he can't also find enjoyment in things, and so be uncultured; and no uncultured person is completely thoughtless. With Hegel it finally comes to light what a longing for *things* even the most cultured person has, and what disgust he harbors for every "hollow theory." For him, actuality, the world of things, is supposed to conform completely to thought, and no concept is to be without reality. This gave Hegel's system the reputation of being the most objective, as if in it thought and thing celebrated their unification. But this was just thought's most extreme violence, its highest despotism and absolute dictatorship, the triumph of the spirit, and with it the triumph of *philosophy*. Hereafter, philosophy can achieve nothing higher, because its highest form is the *omnipotence of the spirit*, the almightiness of the mind.[60]

60 ▸ Rousseau, the philanthropists, and others, were hostile to culture and intelligence, but they overlooked the fact that this is present in *all* Christian human beings, and set themselves only against learned and refined culture.

Spiritual people have something they've *planted in their head* that is supposed to be realized. They have concepts of love, goodness, and the like, which they would like to see *actualized;* therefore they want to build a kingdom of love on earth, in which no one any longer acts from self-interest, but everyone acts "from love." Love is supposed to *rule.* What they've planted in their head, what is one supposed to call it other than—a *fixed idea?* Indeed, it "*haunts* their heads." The most oppressive phantasm is *the* human being. Just think of the proverb, "The road to ruin is paved with good intentions." The intention to completely actualize humanity in oneself, to completely become human, is of such a ruinous sort; such are the intentions to become good, noble, loving, etc.

In the sixth part of the *Denkwürdigkeiten,* page 7, Bruno Bauer says:

> *That bourgeois class, which was to be given such terrible importance in recent history, is capable of no self-sacrificial action, no enthusiasm for an idea, no exaltation; it devotes itself to nothing but the interests of its mediocrity, i.e., it remains forever limited to itself, and wins in the end only though its hugeness, with which it was able to exhaust the efforts of passion, enthusiasm, consistency, through its surface, into which it sucks a portion of the new ideas.*[61]

And on page 6: "It has turned the revolutionary ideas, for which not it, but unselfish or impassioned men sacrificed themselves, solely to its own advantage, has transformed spirit into money. Of course, after it had removed from those ideas their point, their consistency, their destructive seriousness, fanatical against all egoism." These people are, thus, not self-sacrificing, not enthusiastic, not idealistic, not consistent, not zealots; they are egoists in the usual sense, selfish people, mindful of their advantage, levelheaded, calculating.

Who then is self-sacrificing? In the full sense, certainly one who risks everything else for *one thing,* one goal, one desire, one passion.

61 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die Septembertage 1792 und die ersten Kämpfe der Parteien der Republik in Frankreich,* Part I (Charlottenburg, 1844), p.7. (*Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte der neueren Zeit seit der Französischen Revolution. Nach den Quellen und Original-Memoiren bearbeitet und hrsg. von Bruno Bauer und Edgar Bauer*).

Isn't the lover, who abandons father and mother, endures all dangers and hardships, to reach his goal, self-sacrificing? Or the ambitious person, who offers up all desires, wishes, and satisfactions to the single passion, or the miser who denies himself everything to gather treasures, or the pleasure-seeker, etc.? He is ruled by a passion to which he brings the others as sacrifices.

And are these self-sacrificing people perhaps not selfish, not egoists? Since they have only one ruling passion, they provide only for one satisfaction, but for this one all the more eagerly; they're completely absorbed in it. All that they do is egoistic, but it is one-sided, close-minded, bigoted egoism; it is being possessed.

"Well, those are petty passions, by which, in contrast, the human being should not let himself be enslaved. The human being must make sacrifices for a great idea, a great cause!" A "great idea," a "good cause," might be the glory of God, for which countless people went to their death; Christianity, which has found its willing martyrs; the one true church, which has greedily demanded the sacrifice of heretics; liberty and equality, which had the bloody guillotine in their service.

Anyone who lives for a great idea, a good cause, a doctrine, a system, a lofty calling, may not let any worldly desires, any self-seeking interests, arise in himself. Here we have the concept of *priestliness,* or as it can also be called in its pedagogic activity, schoolmasterliness; because ideals act as schoolmasters over us. The clergyman is quite specifically called to live the idea and to work for the idea, the truly good cause. Therefore, people feel how little it befits him to show any worldly arrogance, to desire a life of luxury, to take part in pleasures like dancing and playing, in short, to have anything other than a "sacred interest." From this most likely also comes the meager salary of teachers[62] who are supposed to feel rewarded solely by the sacredness of their calling and "renounce" other enjoyments.

There is even no lack of a rank list of sacred ideas, one or more of which a human being is supposed to look upon as his calling. Family, fatherland, science, etc., may find in me a servant faithful to his calling.

Here we come upon the age-old madness of the world, which has

62 A sarcastic reference, I am sure, to Stirner's own experience as a schoolteacher.

not yet learned to do without priestliness: to live and to create *for an idea,* that is the human being's calling, and his *human* worth is measured by the faithfulness of his compliance.

This is the rule of the idea, or priestliness. Robespierre, for example, Saint Just, etc., were priests through and through, inspired by the idea, enthusiasts, consistent tools of this idea, ideal human beings. So Saint Just proclaims in a speech:

> *There is something terrible in the sacred love of country; it is so exclusive that it sacrifices everything to the public interest without mercy, without fear, without human consideration. It hurls Manlius*[63] *into the abyss; it sacrifices its private inclinations: it leads Regulus*[64] *to Carthage, throws a Roman into the chasm, and sets Marat,*[65] *as a victim of his devotion, in the Panthéon.*

A world of countless "personal" profane interests now stands against these representatives of ideal or sacred interests. No idea, no system, no sacred cause is so great as to never be outpaced and modified by personal interests. Even if they momentarily, and in times of rage and fanaticism, remain silent, they still soon come out on top again through "the sound sense of the people." Those ideas only win completely when they are no longer hostile to personal interests, i.e., when they satisfy egoism.

The man who's crying kippers just outside my window has a personal interest in good sales, and when his wife or anyone else wishes him the like, it remains a personal interest nonetheless. On the other hand, if a thief stole his basket from him, then there would

63 Hurled to his death from the Tarpeian rock after being accused of trying to set himself up as a tyrant.

64 Captured in the war against Carthage in 255 BCE, sent to Rome to negotiate the release of some wealthy Carthaginians who had been captured, under oath to return to Carthage, then supposedly tortured to death by the Carthaginians upon his return. For some reason, such a tale is supposed to encourage people to keep their word.

65 French revolutionary and founding editor of *L'Ami du peuple,* murdered by Charlotte Corday; the Convention ordered that he be "Pantheonized" in September 1794, but by February 1795, his remains were removed from the Panthéon as he fell into disfavor.

immediately arise an interest of the many, of the whole city, of the whole country, or, in a word, of all who abhor theft; an interest in which the kipper-seller's person would become indifferent, and in its place the category of the "robbery victim" would come to the fore. But even here it could all come down to a personal interest, as each participant thinks that he must agree to the punishment of the thief, because otherwise unpunished stealing might become general and he too might be robbed of his own. But such a calculation can hardly be assumed for the many, and one will instead hear the cry: the thief is a "criminal." Here we have a judgment before us, as the thief's action receives its expression in the concept "crime." Now the matter is posed like this: even if a crime didn't cause the least bit of damage either to me or to any of those in whom I take an interest, I would still *condemn* it. Why? Because I am enthusiastic for *morality*, I am filled with the *idea* of morality; I persecute what is hostile to it. Proudhon, for example, because for him theft counts as unquestionably despicable, believes that with the sentence "property is theft" he has already denounced property. In the priestly sense, theft is always a *crime*, or at least an offense.

Here personal interest is at an end. This particular person who has stolen the basket is completely indifferent to my person; I take an interest only in the thief, this concept of which that person portrays a specimen. The thief and the human being are in my mind irreconcilable opposites; because one is not truly human when one is a thief; one degrades the human being or "humanity" in himself when he steals. Falling outside of personal concern, one gets into *philanthropy*, human kindness, which is usually misunderstood, as if it were a love for human beings, for each individual, whereas it is nothing but a love for *the* human being, the fictitious concept, the phantasm. It is not τους ανθρωπους, human beings, but *τον ανθρωπον*, the human being, that the philanthropist carries in his heart. Of course, he is concerned about every individual, but only because he wants to see his beloved ideal actualized everywhere.

So there's no question here of concern for me, you, us; that would be personal interest, and belongs under the heading of "worldly love."

Philanthropy is a heavenly, spiritual, a—priestly love. The *human* must be established in us, and even if we poor devils were to come to ruin because of it. It is the same priestly principle as that famous *fiat iustitia, pereat mundus*;[66] human being and justice are ideas, ghosts, for the love of which everything is sacrificed; therefore, the priestly spirits are the "self-sacrificing" ones.

Whoever goes into raptures over *the human* leaves persons out of consideration so far as that rapture extends, and floats in an ideal, sacred interest. The human is indeed not a person, but an ideal, a phantasm.

Now, a whole variety of things can belong to and be reckoned as the human. If one finds the human being's main requirement in piety, religious priestliness arises; if one sees it in morality, then moral priestliness raises its head. The priestly spirits of our times would therefore like to make everything a "religion"; a "religion of liberty," a "religion of equality," etc., and for them all ideas become a "sacred thing," for example, even citizenship, politics, the public, freedom of the press, trial by jury, and so on.

Now what does "altruism" mean in this sense? To have only an ideal interest, in which no respect of persons is allowed!

The headstrong attitude of the worldly person opposes this, but for thousands of years has always succumbed at least to the extent of having to bend the unruly neck and "honor the higher power"; the priesthood pressed it down. When the worldly egoist had shaken off one higher power, such as the Old Testament, the Roman Pope, etc., then immediately there was one seven times higher over him again, such as faith in place of the law, the transformation of all laypeople into priests in place of the limited body of clergy, etc. He was like the possessed man whom seven devils entered when he thought he had freed himself of one.[67]

In the passage quoted above, all capacity to idealize is denied to the bourgeois class. It certainly plotted against the ideal rigorousness with which Robespierre wanted to carry out the principle. The instinct of its interests told it that this rigorousness harmonized too little with

66 "Let justice be done, even if the world should perish."
67 See Matthew 12:43.

what appealed to it, and that it would be acting against itself if it were willing to encourage the enthusiasm for principles. Was it then to behave so unselfishly as to abandon all its aims in order to bring an austere theory to triumph? It appeals to the priests splendidly, to be sure, when people give ear to their call: "Cast everything away from you, and follow me," or, "Sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."[68] Some staunch idealists obey this call; but most people act like Ananias and Sapphira,[69] in that they behave in a half priestly or religious way and in a half worldly way, serving God and Mammon.

I don't blame the bourgeois class for not wanting to let Robespierre rob it of its aims, i.e., for inquiring of its egoism how far it could facilitate the revolutionary idea. But one could blame (if blame were at all appropriate here) those who let the interests of the bourgeois class rob them of their own interests. However, won't they likewise sooner or later learn to understand what is to their advantage? August Becker[70] says: "To win over the producers (proletarians), a negation of the traditional conception of rights is by no means enough. The people unfortunately care little for the theoretical victory of the idea. One must demonstrate to them *ad oculos*[71] how this victory can be used practically in life."[72] And on page 32: "You must get hold of the people with their actual interests if you want to act upon them." He then shows how a rather agreeable amorality has gained ground among our peasants, because they'd rather pursue their actual interests than the commandments of morality.

Because the revolutionary priests and schoolmasters serve the human being, they cut off the head of *human beings*. The revolutionary laymen or the profane ones had no more inhibitions about cutting off heads, but were less concerned about human rights, i.e., the rights of man, than about their own.

How does it come about, though, that the egoism of those who

68 See Matthew 19:21.

69 A Christian married couple who held back some of their property when the early church instituted the community of goods. See Acts 5:1-11.

70 A German utopian socialist.

71 "Before their eyes."

72 ▸ August Becker, *Die Volksphilosophie unserer Tage* (Neumünster near Zurich, 1843), p. 22.

assert a personal interest, and inquire of it all the time, still always succumbs to a priestly or schoolmasterly, i.e., an ideal interest? Their person seems to them too small, too insignificant, and in fact it is, to lay claim to everything and to be able to completely carry it through. There's a sure sign of this in the fact that they divide themselves into two persons, one eternal and one temporal, and every time care either only for the one or only for the other, on Sunday for the eternal, on the workday[73] for the temporal, in prayer for the former, in work for the latter. They have the priest within themselves, and therefore don't get rid of him, and hear themselves getting a tongue-lashing inwardly every Sunday.

How people have struggled and calculated to *determine* these dualistic essences! Idea followed upon idea, principle upon principle, system upon system, and none were able to hold down the contradiction of the "worldly" person, the so-called "egoist," for long. Doesn't this prove that all those ideas were too powerless to take up my whole will into themselves and satisfy it? They were and remained hostile to me, even if the hostility lay concealed for a long time. Will it be like this with *ownness*? Is it also just an attempt at mediation? Every principle to which I turned, such as to *reason*, I always had to turn away from again. Or can I always be rational, setting everything up in my life according to reason? I can certainly *strive* for rationality, I can *love* it, just as I can also love God and every other idea. I can be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, as I love God. But what I love, what I strive for, is only in my idea, my conception, my thoughts; it is in my heart, in my head, it is in me like the heart, but it is not I, I am not it.

To the activity of priestly spirits belongs particularly what one often hears being called "*moral influence*."

Moral influence takes its start where *humiliation*[74] begins; indeed, it is nothing more than this humiliation itself, the breaking and bending of courage down into *humility*. If I shout to someone to get

73 Stirner here uses "*Werkeltage*." This may simply be an anachronism, but "*Werkel*" translates as "hurdy-gurdy," the "street organ" of the organ-grinder. Perhaps Stirner was making a joke or wordplay.

74 In this passage, Stirner again plays on the relationship between "*Demütigung*" (humiliation), "*Mut*" (or in this case, the variation, "*Mutes*"—courage), and "*Demut*" (humility).

out of there when a rock is about to be blasted, I'm exerting no moral influence with this demand; if I say to a child, "You'll go hungry if you don't eat what is put on the table," this is not moral influence. But if I tell him: "You're going to pray, honor your parents, respect the crucifix, speak the truth, etc., because this belongs to the human being and is the human *calling*," or even, "this is God's will," then moral influence is complete: a person should bend to the human calling, should be obedient, become humble, should give up his will to an alien one which is set up as rule and law; he should abase himself before something *higher*: self-abasement. "He who abases himself shall be exalted."[75] Yes, yes, in time children must be *required* to practice piety, godliness, and respectability; a person of good upbringing is one into whom "good principles" have been *instilled* and *impressed*, drummed, rammed, and preached.

If one shrugs his shoulders about it, the good immediately wring their hands and cry: "But, for heaven's sake, if one should give children no good teachings, then they would run straightaway into the jaws of sin and become good-for-nothing brats!" Not so fast, you prophets of doom. They'll certainly become good-for-nothing in your sense; but your sense is simply quite a good-for-nothing sense. The cheeky rascals will no longer let you cajole and whine anything into them, and will have no sympathy for all the follies for which you've raved and babbled since time immemorial; they will annul the law of inheritance, i.e., they will not be willing to inherit your stupidities as you've inherited them from your fathers; they destroy *original sin*. If you command them: "Bow down before the Most High," they will answer: "If he wants to bow us down, let him come and do it himself; we, at least, will not bow down of our own free will." And if you threaten them with his wrath and his punishment, they will take it like being threatened with the bow-wow. If you no longer succeed in making them afraid of ghosts, then the rule of ghosts is at an end, and old wives' tales find no—*belief*.

And isn't it precisely the liberals again who press for a good education and improvement of the educational system? For how could their liberalism, their "freedom within the limits of the law," come

75 See Matthew 23:12.

about without discipline? Even if they don't exactly train them in the fear of God, they demand the *fear of the human* all the more strictly, and arouse "enthusiasm for the true human calling" through discipline.

A long time went by, in which people were content with the illusion of having the *truth,* without seriously wondering whether perhaps they themselves must be true in order to possess the truth. This time was the *Middle Ages.* With the common,[76] i.e., the material consciousness, the consciousness that is receptive only to things, or to what is sensuous and obvious,[77] they thought to grasp the immaterial and the non-sensuous. As one certainly strains his eye to see what is distant, or laboriously exercises his hand until the fingers press the keys skillfully, so they mortified themselves in the most diverse ways so that they would be able to take the supernatural completely into themselves. However, what they mortified was still only the sensual human being, the common consciousness, so-called finite or objective thinking. But because this thinking, this understanding, which Luther "raspberries"[78] under the name of reason, is incapable of perceiving the divine, its mortification contributed just as much to understanding the truth as if one exercised the feet year in and year out and hoped in this way that they would finally learn to play the flute. Luther, with whom the Middle Ages ended, was the first to realize that the human being himself must become something other, if he wanted to perceive the truth, namely, just as true as the truth itself. Only those who already have the truth on faith, only those who *believe* in it, can become partakers of it; in other words, only the believer finds it accessible and sounds its depths. Only the human

76 The German word "*gemein*" often has negative connotations, thus "common," but also "vulgar," "base," etc. The reader should keep this in mind throughout this passage, as Stirner is pointing out the arrogance of those who hold to a Christian, rational, philosophical, "scientific" consciousness, who assume that their belief in the spiritual or the ideal gives them a higher consciousness.

77 There is a wordplay here on "*Sinnliches*" (sensuous) and "*Sinnfälliges*" (obvious).

78 Stirner here uses "*anpfuit*," a verb derived from the German exclamation "*pfui*" which represents a sound or exclamation of disgust or derision, as "boo," "yuck," "fooey," or... the raspberry. Luther has something of a reputation for such things, as in the story about him chasing away the devil with a fart.

organ that is able to blow out of the lungs can also achieve flute-playing, and only the person who has the right organ for it can become a partaker of truth. One who is able to think only of sensuous, objective, material things, also imagines only material things in truth. But truth is spirit, utterly non-sensuous, therefore only for the "higher consciousness," not for the "earthly-minded."

Therefore, with Luther, the realization arises that truth, since it is a *thought*, is only for the *thinking* person. And this means that the human being must from now on take an utterly different standpoint, namely, the heavenly, believing, scientific standpoint, or the standpoint of *thinking* in relation to its object, the—*thought*, the standpoint of the spirit in relation to the spirit. Thus: only like recognizes like. "You are like the spirit you understand."[79]

Because Protestantism broke the medieval hierarchy, the opinion could take root that hierarchy in general was crushed by it, and one might completely overlook that it was precisely a "reformation," and so a revitalization, of the outdated hierarchy. The medieval one had only been a weak hierarchy, because it had to let every possible barbarity of the profane go on unvanquished beside it, and it was the reformation that first hardened the force of the hierarchy. If Bruno Bauer thinks:

> *As the Reformation was mainly the abstract tearing away of the religious principle from art, state, and science, and so was its liberation from those powers with which it had been linked in the antiquity of the church and in the hierarchy of the Middle Ages, so too the theological and ecclesiastical tendencies that emerged from the Reformation are only the consistent carrying out of this abstraction of the religious principle from the other powers of humanity.*[80]

I see precisely the opposite as correct, and think that the rule of spirits or spiritual freedom, which come down to one thing, has

79 Goethe's *Faust,* Part One, line 512.

80 ▸ Bruno Bauer, review of Theodor Kliefoth, *Einleitung in die Dogmengeschichte*, (Parchim and Ludwigslust, 1839) in Arnold Ruge (editor), *Anekdota zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik*, volume II (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), pp 152-3.

never before been so all-embracing and all-powerful, because the current one, rather than tearing away the religious principle from art, state, and science, lifted the latter entirely out of worldliness into the "realm of the spirit" and made them religious.

People appropriately placed Luther and Descartes together in their "He who believes is a God" and "I think, therefore I am" (*cogito, ergo sum*). The heaven of the human being is thought—spirit. Everything can be snatched away from him, except thought, except belief. *Specific* beliefs, such as the belief in Zeus, Astarte, Jehovah, Allah, etc., can be destroyed, but belief is indestructible. In thought is freedom. What I need and what I hunger for is no longer granted to me by *grace,* by the Virgin Mary, by the intercession of the saints, or by the loosening and binding church, but rather I acquire it for myself. In short, my being (the *sum*) is a life in the heaven of thought, of spirit, a *cogitare.* I myself am nothing but a spirit, a thinking one (according to Descartes), a believing one (according to Luther). My body, that I am not; my flesh may *suffer* from lust or torment. I am not my flesh, but rather *I* am *spirit,* only spirit.

This thought runs through the history of the Reformation to the present day.

Only the more modern philosophy since Descartes has made a serious effort to bring Christianity to complete effectiveness by raising the "scientific consciousness" to be the only true and valid one. Therefore, it begins with absolute *doubt*, the *dubitare,* with the "contrition" of the common consciousness, with the rejection of that "spirit"; "thought" does not legitimate. *Nature* counts for nothing to it, the opinion of people, their "human institutions" for nothing, and it does not rest until it has brought reason into everything and can say, "The actual is the rational, and only the rational is the actual."[81] So it has finally brought the spirit, reason, to victory, and everything is spirit because everything is rational; all nature, as well as even the most preposterous opinions of human beings, contains reason; because "it all indeed must serve for the best," i.e., lead to the victory of reason.

Descartes' *dubitare* contains the firm statement that only *cogitare,*

81 A reference to the "Preface" of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.*

thought, spirit—*is*. A complete break with that "common" consciousness which ascribes actuality to *irrational* things! Only the rational is, only spirit is! This is the principle of modern philosophy, the genuine Christian principle. Already Descartes sharply separated the body from the spirit, and "it is the spirit that builds itself a body," says Goethe.[82]

But this philosophy itself, Christian philosophy, still does not get rid of the rational, and therefore still rails against the "merely subjective," against "whims, contingencies, capriciousness," etc. It desires that the *divine* shall become visible in everything, and all consciousness become a knowledge of the divine, and the human being see God everywhere; but God simply never is, without the *devil*.

This is precisely why one is not to give the name of philosopher to a person who indeed has open eyes for the things of the world, a clear and unobstructed view, an accurate judgment about the world, but who sees in the world only the world, in objects only objects, in short, everything prosaically as it is; but the philosopher is only the one who sees, and demonstrates or shows, heaven in the world, the supernatural in the earthly, the—*divine* in the mundane. The former may be ever so wise, but the fact remains:

> *What no wisdom of the wise can see,*
> *a childlike heart practices in simplicity.*[83]

This childlike heart, this eye for the divine, is what it takes to make a philosopher. The first person mentioned above only has a "common" consciousness, but the one who knows the divine and knows how to talk about it, has a "scientific" consciousness. For this reason Bacon was expelled from the realm of philosophers. And further, what people call English philosophy certainly seems to have not produced anything beyond the discoveries of so-called "clear heads,"[84] such as Bacon and Hume. The English didn't know how to raise the

82 Here Stirner makes a mistake, as this quote actually comes from Friedrich Schiller's play *Wallersteins Tod* (*The Death of Wallerstein*), Act III, scene 13.

83 Friedrich Schiller, "Words of Faith," my own translation.

84 Or perhaps "open minds." The German "*offener Köpfe*" could translate either way.

simplicity of the childlike heart to philosophical significance, didn't know how to make—philosophers out of childlike hearts. This is as much as to say: their philosophy was not able to become *theological* or *theology*, and yet it is only as theology that philosophy can actually *realize* itself, complete itself. The battlefield of its death struggle is in theology. Bacon didn't trouble himself with theological questions and cardinal points.

Cognition has its object in life. German thought seeks, more than any other thought, to reach the beginnings and the fountainheads of life, and only sees life in cognition itself. Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* has the meaning: "A person only lives, when he thinks." Thinking life is called "spiritual life"! Only spirit lives, its life is the true life. So just as in nature only the "eternal laws," the spirit or reason of nature, are its true life—in the human being, as in nature, only thought lives; everything else is dead! With the history of the spirit, it had to come to this abstraction, to the life of universalities or of the lifeless. Solely God, who is spirit, lives. Nothing lives but the ghost.

How can one try to maintain that modern philosophy or modern times have brought freedom, since they haven't freed us from the power of objectivity? Or am I perhaps free from despots when I am indeed not afraid of the personal ruler, but of every offense against the reverence which I imagine I owe him? It is no different with modern times. They only changed *existing* objects, the actual ruler, etc., into *imagined* objects, i.e., into *concepts*, before which the old respect was not only not lost, but increased in intensity. Even if people outsmarted God and the devil in their former crass actuality, it was just to devote greater attention to their concepts. "They are rid of the Evil One, evil remains."[85] People felt few reservations about revolting against the existing state or overturning existing laws, once they had decided to no longer let what exists and is tangible impose itself on them; but to sin against the *concept* of the state, to not submit to the *concept* of law, who would have dared that? So one remained a "state citizen," a "law-abiding," loyal person; indeed, one seemed to himself only to be so much more law-abiding, the more

85 Stirner's rephrasing of Mephistopheles' words in "The Witch's Kitchen" in Part One of Goethe's *Faust*, line 2509.

rationalistically he did away with the former defective law in order to honor the "spirit of the law." In all of this, the object had only suffered a transformation, but had remained in their supremacy and sovereignty; in short, people were still stuck in obedience and in being possessed, lived in *reflection*, and had an object on which they reflected, that they respected, and before which they felt reverence and fear. They had done nothing more than to transform *things* into *conceptions* of things, into thoughts and concepts, and their *dependence* thus became more intimate and indissoluble. So it isn't hard, for example, to emancipate oneself from the commands of parents, or to evade the admonitions of one's uncle and aunt, the entreaties of one's brother and sister; but the revoked obedience easily gets into one's conscience, and the less one gives in to individual demands, because rationalistically, through his own reason, he recognizes them as unreasonable, the more conscientiously he holds fast to filial piety and family love and the harder it is for him to forgive himself for a trespass against the *conception* that he has formed of family love and filial duty. Released from dependence on the existing family, one falls into the more binding dependence on the concept of the family; one is ruled by the family spirit. The existing family of Hans, Greta, etc., whose rule has become powerless, is only internalized, while it is left as family in general, to which one simply applies the old saying, "One must obey God rather than men,"[86] whose meaning here is: "I certainly can't follow your senseless demands, but, as my 'family,' you remain the object of my love and care"; because "the family" is a sacred concept, which the individual is never allowed to offend. —And this family, internalized and desensualized into a thought, a conception, now counts as the "sacred," whose despotism is ten times worse because it rumbles in my conscience. This despotism only gets broken, when the family as conception also becomes *nothing* to me. The Christian sentences: "Woman, what have I to do with you?,"[87] "I have come to stir up a man against his father and a daughter against her mother,"[88] and others, are accompanied by references to the heavenly

86 See Acts 5:29.
87 ▸ John 2:4.
88 ▸ Matthew 10:35.

or true family, and mean nothing more than the state's demand, in a collision between it and the family, to obey *its* commands.

It is with morality like it is with the family. Many people break with morals, but with the conception of "morality" it's more difficult. Morality is the "idea" of morals, their spiritual power, their power over the conscience; morals, on the other hand, are too material to rule over the spirit, and do not hold captive a "spiritual" man, a so-called independent, a "freethinker."[89]

Let the Protestant do with it what he will, the "sacred scriptures," the "word of God," still remains sacred for him. Anyone for whom this is no longer "sacred" has ceased to be—a Protestant. But with this, what is "ordained" in it, the divinely established authorities, etc., also remain sacred to him. These things remain for him indissoluble, unapproachable, "raised beyond all doubts"; and since doubt, which in practice becomes a *shaking up,* is what is most the person's own; these things remain "raised" above himself. Whoever cannot *get free* of them will—*believe;* because to believe in them means to be *bound* by them. Because *faith* in Protestantism became a more inward faith, the *enslavement* has also become a more inward enslavement; the person has taken these sanctities into himself, intertwined them with all his hopes and endeavors, made them into a "*matter of conscience,*" prepared from them a "*sacred duty*" for himself. Therefore, what the Protestant's conscience cannot get away from is sacred to him, and conscientiousness most clearly defines his character.

Protestantism has actually made the human being into a "secret police state." The spy and lookout, "conscience," monitors every movement of the mind, and every thought and action is a "matter of conscience," i.e., a police matter. The Protestant consists in this fragmentation of the human being into "natural desire" and "conscience" (inner populace and inner police). Biblical reason (in the place of the Catholic "Church reason") is considered sacred, and this feeling and consciousness that the biblical word is sacred is called—conscience. With this, then, sacredness gets "shoved into one's conscience." If one doesn't free himself from conscience, the consciousness of the sacred,

89 In German, "*Freigeist,*" which would literally translate as "free spirit," but is used to refer both to freethinkers and to libertines.

he can indeed act unconscientiously, but never without conscience.

The Catholic finds himself satisfied when he fulfills the *command;* the Protestant acts to "the best of his knowledge and conscience." The Catholic is in fact only a *layman;* the Protestant is himself a *clergyman.*[90] This is precisely the progress of the Reformation period over the Middle Ages, and also its curse: that the *spiritual*[91] became complete.

What was the Jesuitical morality other than a continuation of the indulgence rummage sale,[92] except that the person who was relieved of his sins now also gained *insight* into the remission of sins and convinced himself that his sin was actually taken away from him, since in this or that particular case (casuists) what he committed was no sin at all. The rummage sale of indulgences had made all sins and transgressions permissible and silenced every conscientious impulse. All sensuality could prevail, if it was only purchased from the church. The Jesuits continued this favoring of sensuality, whereas the puritanical, dark, fanatical, repentant, contrite, praying Protestants, on the other hand, as the true perfecters of Christianity, accepted only the intellectual and spiritual person. Catholicism, particularly the Jesuits, in this way helped to advance egoism, found an involuntary and unconscious following within Protestantism itself, and saved us from the degeneration and destruction of *sensuality*. Nevertheless, the Protestant spirit spread its rule further and further; and since, compared with it, the "divine," the Jesuit spirit represents only the "diabolical," which is inseparable from everything divine, this Jesuit spirit can never assert itself alone, but must watch as, for example, in France, the philistinism of Protestantism finally wins, and spirit is on top.[93]

90 "*Geistlicher.*"

91 "*Geistliche.*"

92 "*Ablaßkrames*" in German. "*Ablaß*" translates as "indulgence." "*Kram*" translates as "junk" or "odds and ends" and seems to have a rather derogatory connotation. The verb "*kramen*" translates as "to rummage."

93 David Leopold in a note in the Cambridge University Press edition of *The Ego and Its Own* (1995) presumes this to be a reference to Calvinism. I consider this a rather literalist and shallow presumption. I think that Stirner is much more likely referring to French thought from Descartes through the likes of Diderot and Rousseau and on to the time of the French Revolution, which placed a prime emphasis on Reason as the way to judge thought and action. One may argue that in the case of such people as Diderot, a bit of the Jesuit remained in

People keep on complimenting Protestantism for having brought the worldly back into honor, for example, marriage, the state, etc. But the worldly in itself, as worldly, the profane, is of far less importance to Protestantism than to Catholicism, which lets the profane world exist, indeed, savors its pleasures, whereas the rational, consistent Protestant prepares to annihilate the worldly altogether, and that simply by *making it sacred*. So marriage has been robbed of its naturalness by becoming sacred, not in the sense of the Catholic sacrament, where it only receives its consecration from the church and so is basically unholy, but in the sense of being something sacred in itself from the start, a sacred relationship. The same for the state, etc. Formerly the pope gave it and its princes his blessing and consecration; now the state is inherently sacred, majesty is sacred without needing the priestly blessing. The natural order or natural law was made absolutely sacred as "the divine order." Thus it is said, for example, in the Augsburg Confession, Article II: "So now we reasonably abide by the saying, as the masters of jurisprudence have wisely and rightly said: that man and wife should be together is a natural law. Now if it is *natural law, then it is God's order,* therefore implanted in nature, and therefore also a *divine* law."[94] And is it anything more than enlightened Protestantism, when Feuerbach declares moral relations sacred, indeed not as God's order, but rather for the *spirit* that dwells in them?

> *But marriage—we mean, of course, marriage as the free bond of love—is* ***sacred in itself,*** *by the* ***nature*** *of the union which is formed here. The only marriage that is a* ***religious*** *one is* ***that*** *marriage which is a* ***true*** *marriage, which corresponds to the* ***essence*** *of marriage, of love. And so it is with all moral relations. They are*

their atheistic Protestantism, since they did retain a place for the sensual. But Calvinism never won out in France, whereas arguably Cartesian rationalism and the philosophical, scientific, and socio-political explorations that followed from it did, sufficiently to carry out a revolution and to continue countering reactionary regimes with new revolutionary ferment for some time thereafter.

94 From my own search, it seems that this isn't an exact quote from the Augsburg Confession, but rather a summary of Article II ("Of the Marriage of Priests") of the second part of the Confession ("Articles in which Are Reviewed the Abuses which Have Been Corrected").

> *then only* ***moral,*** *they are then only cultivated in the moral sense, when they are regarded as* ***sacred in themselves.*** *True friendship exists only when the* ***limits*** *of friendship are preserved with religious conscientiousness, with the same conscientiousness with which the believer protects the dignity of his God. Let friendship be* ***sacred,*** *property* ***sacred,*** *marriage* ***sacred,*** *the well-being of every human being* ***sacred,*** *for you, but sacred* ***in and of themselves.***[95a]

This is a very essential moment. In Catholicism the worldly can indeed be *consecrated* or *made sacred,* but it is not sacred without this priestly blessing; contrarily, in Protestantism worldly relations are sacred *in themselves,* sacred by their mere existence. The Jesuit maxim: "The aim makes the means sacred" is precisely connected to the consecration through which sacredness is awarded. No means are holy or unholy in themselves, but their relationship to the church, their usefulness to the church, makes the means sacred. Regicide was declared to be such; if it was done for the benefit of the church, then its sanctification by the church would be certain, even if not openly expressed. For the Protestant, majesty counts as sacred; for the Catholic, only the majesty consecrated by the pontiff could count as such, and it counts as such only because the pope, even when it is without a special act, grants this sacredness to it once and for all. If he withdrew his consecration, the king would be left for the Catholic as just a "man of the world or layman," an "unconsecrated" man.

If the Protestant seeks to discover sacredness in the sensual itself, so that he is then connected only to what is sacred, the Catholic instead strives to expel the sensual from himself into a specific region, where it, like the rest of nature, keeps its value for itself. The Catholic Church eliminated worldly marriage from its consecrated orders, and withdrew its own from the worldly family; the Protestant church declared marriage and the family bond sacred, and therefore not unsuitable for its clergy.

A Jesuit may, as a good Catholic, make everything sacred. He need only say to himself, for example, "I as a priest am necessary to

95 ▸ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, i.e., *The Essence of Christianity* (Leipzig, 1843), p.403.

the church, but I serve it more zealously when I satisfy my desires properly; therefore, I will seduce this girl, have my enemy poisoned, etc.; my end is sacred, because it is a priest's, and therefore makes the means sacred." Indeed, in the end, it is still done for the benefit of the church. Why should the Catholic priest shrink from handing Emperor Heinrich VII[96] the poisoned wafer for the—church's well-being?

The properly—churchly Protestants railed against every "innocent pleasure," because only the sacred, the spiritual, could be innocent. What they couldn't verify the holy spirit in, the Protestants had to reject: dancing, theater, pageantry (in the church, for example), and the like.

Compared to this puritanical Calvinism, Lutheranism is again more on the religious, i.e., spiritual path, is more radical. That is, the former immediately excludes a lot of things as sensual and worldly and *purifies* the church; Lutheranism, on the other hand, tries to bring *spirit* into all things as much as possible, to recognize the holy spirit as the essence in everything, and so to make everything worldly *sacred*. ("No one can resist an honorable kiss." The spirit of the honorable makes it sacred.) Therefore the Lutheran Hegel (he explains this in some place or other: he "will remain a Lutheran") succeeded in the complete realization of the concept in everything. Reason, i.e., the holy spirit, is in everything, or "the actual is rational." Which is to say, the actual is in fact everything, therefore in each thing, for example, the truth can be detected in each lie; there is no absolute lie, no absolute evil, and the like.

Great "spiritual works" were created almost exclusively by Protestants, because they alone were the true followers and perfecters of *spirit*.

How little the human being is able to conquer! He must let the sun run its course, the sea swell its waves, the mountains rise to the sky. So he stands powerless before the *unconquerable*. Can he resist the impression that he is *helpless* against this gigantic world? It is a fixed *law* to which he must submit; it determines his *fate*. Now what did pre-Christian humanity work toward? Toward getting rid of the

96 Henry VII to English speakers.

bombardments of fortune, not letting themselves be *upset* by them. The Stoics achieved this through apathy, declaring nature's attacks *indifferent,* and not letting themselves be affected by them. Horace utters the famous *Nil admirari*,[97] in which he likewise announces the indifference of the *other,* the world; it is not supposed to influence us or arouse our astonishment. And that *impavidum ferient ruinae*[98] expresses the very same *unshakability* as Psalm 46:3: "We do not fear though the earth should perish." In all this the space is opened for the Christian principle that the world is vanity, for the Christian *contempt of the world.*

The *unshakable* spirit of "the wise," with which the old world worked toward its end, now experienced an *inner shaking* against which no emotional tranquility, no Stoic courage, was able to protect it. The spirit, safe against all the world's influences, impervious to its shocks, raised above its attacks, admiring nothing, not to be disconcerted by any collapse of the world,—inexorably frothed over again, because in its inner being gases (spirits) developed, and, after the *mechanical shock* which comes for outside became ineffective, *chemical tensions*, which agitate from inside began to carry out their wonderful play.

In fact, ancient history ends with this, that *I* have won my ownership of the world. "All things have been handed over to me by my Father."[99] It has stopped being overpowering, unapproachable, sacred, divine, etc., to me; it is *godless,* and now I treat it so utterly as I please that, if it mattered to me, I could exercise every miraculous power, that is, power of the spirit, over it: remove mountains, command mulberry trees to rip themselves up and plant themselves in the sea,[100] and do all that is possible, *thinkable:* "All things are possible to him who believes."[101c] I am the *lord*[102] of the world, mine is the "*glory.*"[103]

97 "To wonder at nothing," from Horace, *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle 6, line 1: "To wonder at nothing is just about the one and only thing, Numicus, that can make a man happy and keep him so."

98 "Strikes him fearless," from Horace, *Odes*, Book 3, Ode 3, line 7: "If the world should break and fall on him, it would strike him fearless."

99 ▸ Matthew 11:27.

100 ▸ Luke 17:6.

101 ▸ Mark 9:23.

102 "*Herr.*"

103 "*Herrlichkeit.*"

The world has become prosaic, because the divine has vanished from it: it is my property, which I manage as I (that is, the spirit) see fit.

When I had raised myself to being the *owner of the world*, egoism had won its first complete victory, had overcome the world, had become *worldless,* and had put the acquisitions of a long world era under lock and key.

The first property, the first "glory," has been acquired!

But the lord of the world is not yet lord of his thoughts, his feelings, his will: he is not the lord and owner of the spirit, because the spirit is still sacred, the "Holy Spirit," and the "worldless" Christian is not able to become "godless." If the ancient struggle was a struggle against the *world,* the medieval (Christian) struggle is a struggle against *oneself,* the spirit; the former against the outer world, the latter against the inner world. The medieval person is the "inward-looking" person, the thoughtful, meditative person.

All wisdom of the ancients is *worldly wisdom;* all wisdom of the moderns is *divine scholarship*.

The pagans (including the Jews) got finished with the *world;* but now it was also important to get finished with self, the *spirit;* to become spiritless or godless.

For nearly two thousand years we've been working to subjugate the Holy Spirit to ourselves, and bit by bit we have torn off many pieces of sacredness and trampled them underfoot; but the enormous enemy always rises anew under a changed form and name. The spirit is not yet godless, desecrated, profaned. True enough, it no longer flutters as a dove over our heads; true enough, it no longer only blesses the saints, but also lets itself be captured by the laity; but as the spirit of humanity, as the human spirit, as the spirit of *the human*, it still remains an *alien* spirit to me, to you, still a long way from becoming our unrestricted *property,* which we deal with at our pleasure. However, one thing certainly happened, and obviously guided the course of post-Christian history: and this one thing was the endeavor to make the Holy Spirit *more human,* and bring it closer to human beings, or human beings closer to it. Thus, it came about that it could finally be understood as the "spirit of humanity" and under various expressions, like "idea of humanity, humanness, humanitarianism,

universal love of humanity," etc., appeared more appealing, more familiar, more accessible.

Wouldn't you think that now everybody could possess the Holy Spirit, take the idea of humanity up into himself, bring humanness to form and existence in himself?

No, the spirit is not stripped of its sacredness and robbed of its inaccessibility; it is not within our reach, not our property; because the spirit of humanity is not *my* spirit. It can be my *ideal,* and as a thought I call it mine; the *thought* of humanity is my property, and I prove this well enough by putting it forward completely according to my viewpoint, and laying it out this way today, and tomorrow differently; we imagine it in the most varied ways. But it is at the same time a restricted inheritance, which I can neither sell off nor get rid of.

Under many transformations, in time the Holy Spirit became the "*absolute* idea," which again, in various mutations, broke apart into the different ideas of love of humanity, rationality, civic virtue, etc.

But can I call the idea my property if it is the idea of humanity, and can I consider the spirit to be overcome if I am supposed to serve it, to "sacrifice myself" to it? Antiquity, when it came to an end, had gained its ownership over the world only when it had broken the world's supremacy and "divinity," recognized its powerlessness and "vanity."

The situation with the *spirit* corresponds. When I have degraded it to a *phantasm* and its power over me to *bats in the belfry,* then I can view it as profaned, desecrated, godless, and then I can use it as one uses nature at his pleasure without scruples.

The "nature of the matter," the "concept of the relationship," is supposed to guide me in my treatment of the matter or consummation of the relationship. As if a concept of the matter existed in itself, and was not rather the concept one forms of the matter! As if a relationship which we enter into was not itself unique, because of the uniqueness of those who enter into it! As if it depended on how others categorize it! But as people separated the "essence of the human being" from actual human beings, and judged the latter according to the former, so they also separate his action from him, and assess it according to "human value." *Concepts* are to decide everywhere,

concepts are to regulate life, concepts are to *rule*. This is the religious world, to which Hegel gave a systematic expression, by bringing method into the nonsense, and by perfecting the conceptual rules into a rounded, firmly-established dogmatic theology. Everything is cranked out according to concepts, and the actual human being, i.e., I, am forced to live according to these conceptual rules. Could there be a more terrible rule of law, and didn't Christianity admit right from the start that it intended only to apply the rule of law of Judaism more strictly? ("Not one letter of the law shall be lost!"[104])

Liberalism only brought up other concepts; human instead of divine, governmental instead of ecclesiastical, "scientific" instead of religious, or more generally, actual concepts and eternal laws instead of "crude propositions" and rules.

Now nothing but *spirit* rules in the world. A countless multitude of concepts buzz about in people's heads, and what are those who strive to get further doing? They negate these concepts to put new ones in their place! They say: "You're making a false concept of right, of the state, of the human being, of freedom, of the truth, of marriage, etc.; the concept of right, etc., is rather the one which we now establish." So the conceptual confusion moves forward.

World history has dealt cruelly with us, and the spirit has gained an almighty power. You must have regard for my miserable shoes, which could protect your naked foot, my salt, which could make your potatoes palatable, and my state-carriage, whose possession would appease all of your needs at once; you are not allowed to reach out for them. The human being is supposed to recognize the *independence* of all these and countless other things; he is supposed to count them as something that cannot be seized or approached, as something of which he is deprived. He must have regard for it, respect it; woe to him if he stretches out his fingers with desire; we call that "being light-fingered"!

How abjectly little is left us, indeed, nothing at all! Everything has been removed, we are not allowed to venture on anything unless it has been given to us; we live only by the *grace* of the giver. You aren't even allowed to pick up a needle, unless you have gotten *permission*

104 See Matthew 5:17-18.

to do it. And got it from whom? From *respect!* Only when it lets you have it as property, only when you can *respect* it as property, only then are you allowed to take it. And again, you are supposed to form no thought, speak no syllable, commit no action, that would have their guarantee solely in you, instead of receiving it from morality or reason or humanity. Happy *lack of inhibition* of the desirous human being, how mercilessly they have tried to slaughter you on the altar of *inhibition!*

But around the altar a church bulges its arches, and its walls are moving further and further out. What they enclose is—*sacred*. You can no longer reach out for it, no longer touch it. Howling with a devouring hunger you wander round about these walls, searching for the little that is profane, and the circles of your path keep on extending further and further. Soon that church will embrace the whole world, and you'll be driven out to the furthest edge; one more step, and the *world of the sacred* has triumphed: you sink into the abyss. So take courage while there is still time, stray no longer in the overgrazed profane, dare the leap, and rush in through the gates into the sanctuary itself. When you *devour the sacred*, you have made it your *own!* Digest the sacramental wafer, and you are rid of it!

1.3 The Free

Since the ancients and moderns were presented above in two sections, it might seem that the free were to be passed off here in a third section as independent and separate. This is not so. The free are only the more modern and most modern among the "moderns," and are put in a separate section merely because they belong to the present; and what is present, above all, claims our attention here. I give "the free" only as a translation of "the liberals," but with regard to the concept of freedom, as with generally so many other things whose anticipatory mention I can't avoid, I must refer to what comes later.

1.3.1 Political Liberalism

After people had drained the goblet of so-called absolute monarchy pretty much down to the dregs, they became too clearly aware that their drink didn't taste human not to begin craving a different glass. Since our fathers were after all human beings, they finally demanded also to be regarded as such.

Whoever sees something other than human beings in us, in him we will likewise not see a human being, but an inhuman monster, and will meet him as an inhuman monster; on the other hand, whoever recognizes us as human beings and protects us against the danger of being treated inhumanly, we will honor as our true protector and patron.

So let's stick together and protect the human being in each other; then we find the necessary protection in our *sticking together*, and in ourselves, *the ones who stick together*, a community of those who know their human dignity and stick together as "human beings." Our

sticking together is the *state*,; we who stick together are the *nation*.

In our coming together as nation or state we are only human beings. How we behave in other ways as individuals and what self-seeking impulses we may succumb to there belong solely to our *private* life; our *public* or state life is a *purely human* one. Anything inhuman or "egoistic" that clings to us is degraded to a "private matter," and we meticulously distinguish the state from "civil society"[105] where "egoism" pursues its essence.

The true human being is the nation, but the individual is always an egoist. Therefore cast off your individuality or separation in which egoistic inequality and discord dwell, and devote yourself entirely to the true human being, the nation, or the state. Then you will count as human beings and have all that is the human being's; the state, the true human being, will entitle you to all that belongs to it, and give you "human rights"; the human being gives you its rights!

Such is the speech of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie is nothing other than the thought that the state is all in all, the true human being, and that the human value of the individual consists of being a citizen of the state. He seeks his highest honor in being a good citizen; beyond which he knows nothing higher than, at the highest, the antiquated "being a good Christian."

The bourgeoisie developed itself in the struggle against the privileged classes, by which it was cavalierly treated as the "third estate" and thrown together with the *canaille*.[106] In other words, up to now the state had recognized the inequality of persons. The nobleman's son was selected for positions to which the most distinguished bourgeois citizen aspired in vain. The bourgeois sensibility revolted against this. No more distinction, no preferential treatment of persons, no class difference! Let all be alike! No *special interest* should be pursued anymore, but rather the *general interest of all*. The state should be a community of free and equal human beings, and everyone should devote himself to the "good of the whole," merge into the *state*, make the state his aim and ideal. State! State! Such was the

105 The German here is "*bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*" which can also be translated as "bourgeois society."

106 The rabble.

universal call, and from then on people sought for the "right state form," the best constitution, and so the state in its best formulation. The thought of the state penetrated into every heart and awakened enthusiasm; to serve it, this worldly god, became the new divine service and worship. The genuine *political* epoch had dawned. To serve the state or the nation became the highest ideal, state interest the highest interest, state service (for which one does not by any means need to be an official) the highest honor.

So private interests and personalities were then chased away, and sacrifice to the state became the shibboleth. One must give up *himself*, and live only for the state. One must act "with disinterest," must not seek to benefit *himself*, but rather the state. Through this, it has become the true person, before which the individual personality vanishes; not I live, but it lives in me. Therefore if one compared this to the earlier self-seeking, it was selflessness and *impersonality* itself. Before this god—state—all egoism vanished, and before it all were equal; they lacked any other distinction—human beings, nothing but human beings.

The revolution was ignited from the flammable material of *property*. The government needed money. Now it has to prove the proposition that it is *absolute*, and so the master of all property, the sole property owner; it has to *take* for itself *its* money, which was only in the possession of the subjects, not their property. Instead of this, it calls the Estates-General, to let this money be *granted* to it. The fear of the final consequence destroyed the illusion of an *absolute* government; one who must let something be "granted" to him cannot be regarded as absolute. The subjects recognized that they were the *actual property owners*, and that is was *their* money the government demanded. The former subjects acquired the awareness that they were *property owners*. Bailly describes this in a few words: "If you can't dispose of my property without my agreement, how much less can you dispose of my person, of all that concerns my mental and social standing! All this is my property, like the piece of land that I till; and I have a right, an interest, to make the laws myself."[107] Bailly's words certainly

107 Edgar Bauer, *Bailly und die Ersten Tage der Französischen Revolution* (Charlottenburg, 1843), p. 89.

sound as if *everyone* was now a property owner. However, instead of the government, instead of the prince, the property owner and master was now—*the nation*. From now on the ideal is called—"popular freedom"—a "free people," etc.

As early as July 8, 1789, the declaration of the Bishop of Autun and Barrière destroyed the pretense of the importance of each one, the *individual*, in legislation; it showed the complete *powerlessness* of the delegates[108]; the *majority of the representatives* had become *master*. As on July 9 the plan for working on the constitution is carried forward, Mirabeau remarks: "The government has only power,[109] not rights; the source of all *right* is to be found only in the *people*."[110] On July 16, the very same Mirabeau cries out: "Is not the people the source of all *power*?"[111] So the source of all right and the source of all—power! By the way, here the substance of "right" comes to light; it is—*power*. "The one who has power has right."

The bourgeoisie is the heir of the privileged classes. In fact, the rights of the barons, which were taken from them as "usurpations," only passed over to the bourgeoisie, because the bourgeoisie was now called the "nation." All *prerogatives* were given back "into the hands of the nation." As a result, they ceased to be "prerogatives"; they became "rights."[112] From this time on the nation demands tithes, compulsory service; it has inherited the lord's court, the rights of the hunt, the serfs. The night of August 4 was the death night of privileges or "prerogatives" (cities, municipalities, local authorities, were also privileged, provided with prerogatives and the rights of lordship), and ended with the new morning of "rights," "state rights," the "rights of the nation."[113]

The monarch in the person of the "royal master" was a pathetic monarch compared to this new monarch, the "sovereign nation."

108 Stirner is pointing out that each individual delegate didn't matter, because the *majority* ruled.

109 Here and in the following quote Stirner uses "*Gewalt*" which one can also translate as "force" or "violence" often with implications of illegality.

110 Edgar Bauer, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

112 A word play on "*Vorrechte*" (prerogatives) and "*Rechte*" (rights).

113 Edgar Bauer, *op.cit.*, pp. 141, 142.

This *monarchy* was a thousand times tougher, stricter, and more rigorous. Against the new monarch there was no longer any right, any privilege at all; how limited the "absolute king" of the *ancien régime* looks in comparison! The revolution achieved the transformation of *limited monarchy* into *absolute monarchy*. From this time on, every right that this monarch doesn't confer becomes a "presumption"; but every prerogative that it grants becomes a "right." The times demanded *absolute kingship*, absolute monarchy; this is why that so-called absolute monarchy, which had so little understood how to become absolute that it remained limited by a thousand little lords, fell.

What was longed for and striven for over thousands of years, namely to find the absolute lord next to whom there were no longer any other lords and masters to cut back his power, the *bourgeoisie* has created. It has revealed the lord who alone confers "legal titles," and without whose permission *nothing is authorized*. "So we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one."[114a]

Against *right* one can no longer, as against *a* right, come forward with the claim that is is a "wrong." One can only say that it is nonsense, an illusion. If one called it wrong, one would have to put up *another right* against it, and measure it by that. If, on the other hand, one rejects right as such, right in and of itself, completely, then one also rejects the concept of wrong, and eliminates the whole concept of right (to which the concept of wrong belongs).

What does it mean to say that we all enjoy "equality of political rights"? Just this, that the state shows no consideration for my person; that to it I am, like everyone else, just a human being, without having any other significance to impress it. I don't impress it as an aristocrat, as a nobleman's son, or even as an official whose office belongs to me by inheritance (as did the countships, etc., in the Middle Ages, and later under absolute kingship, where hereditary offices occurred). Now the state has a countless number of rights to award: for example, the right to lead a battalion, a company, etc.; the right to lecture at a university, etc.; it has them to award because they are its own, i.e., state rights or "political" rights. In this regard, the state doesn't care

114 ▸ I Corinthians 8:4.

who receives them, so long as the recipient fulfills the duties that arise from the rights that were accorded. Before it, we are all right and—*equal*, one worth no more nor less than another. It's all equal to me who receives the command of the army, says the sovereign state, so long as the grantee duly understands the matter. "Equality of political rights" therefore has the meaning that anyone may acquire every right that the state has to grant, if he just fulfills the conditions attached to it, conditions which are to be sought only in the nature of each right, not in a preference for the person (*persona grata*); the nature of the right to become an officer, for example, brings with it the necessity that one possess healthy limbs and an appropriate level of knowledge, but it doesn't have noble birth as a condition; if, on the other hand, even the most deserving commoner could not attain this rank, then an inequality of political rights would occur. Among the present-day states, some have carried out the principle of equality more, others less.

The monarchy of estates[115] (this is what I'll call absolute kingship, the time of the kings *before* the revolution) kept the individual dependent on a lot of little monarchies. These were cooperatives (societies) like the guilds, the nobility, the priesthood, the bourgeoisie, cities, municipalities, etc. Everywhere the individual had to look upon himself first as a member of this little society, and render unquestioning obedience to its spirit, the *esprit de corps*, as his monarch. His family, the honor of his clan, must be worth more to the individual nobleman than he himself. Only by means of his *corporation*, his estate, did the individual relate to the greater corporation, the state; as in Catholicism, the individual only deals with God through the priest. The third estate, now showing the courage to negate *itself as an estate*, put an end to this. It decided to no longer be and call itself an estate beside other estates, but to glorify and generalize itself into the "*nation*." Thus it created a much more complete and absolute monarchy, and the whole previously ruling *principle of estates*, the principle of little monarchies within the big one, perished. One cannot say that the revolution had taken aim at the first two privileged estates; rather it took aim at the little monarchies of the estates in general. But if the

115 Or statuses.

estates and their tyranny were broken (the king too was only a king of estates, not a citizen-king), the individuals freed from the inequality of the estates were left. Were they now supposed to be without estate and "going wild," no longer bound by any estate (status), without a common bond? No, because the third estate had declared itself a nation only in order not to remain an estate *beside* other estates, but to become the *sole estate*. This sole estate is the nation, the "state" (*status*). What had the individual now become? A political Protestant, because he had come into direct connection with his god, the state. He was no longer, as an aristocrat, in the monarchy of the nobility; as a craftsman, in the monarchy of the guild; but like all, he acknowledged and recognized only *one lord*, the state, as whose servants they received the equalizing title of honor, "citizen."

The *bourgeoisie* is the *aristocracy of merit*[116]; its motto, "for merit, its crowns." It fought against the "idle" aristocracy, because according to it, the hard-working aristocracy acquired by diligent effort and merit, it isn't the "born" who is free, nor even I who am free, but the "deserving one," the honest *servant* (of his king, of the state, of the people in constitutional states). One acquires freedom through *service*, in other words, and acquires "merit," even if one serves—Mammon. One must render outstanding services to the state, i.e., to the principle of the state, to its moral spirit. The one who *serves* this spirit of the state is a good bourgeois citizen, let him live by whatever legal line of business he will. In its eyes, innovators pursue an "unprofitable art." Only the shopkeeper is "practical," and the shopkeeper's spirit is as much the one that pursues public office as the one that in commerce seeks to shear its sheep or in some other way become useful to itself and others.

But if the deserving count as the free (because what does the comfortable bourgeois, the loyal official, lack of that freedom which his heart desires?), then "servants" are the—free. The obedient servant is the free man! What a load of nonsense! Yet this is the sense of the *bourgeoisie*, and its poet, Goethe, like its philosopher, Hegel, have known how to glamorize the dependence of the subject on the object,

116 Throughout this passage there is a wordplay on "*Verdienst*" (merit), "*Verdienstvolle*" (deserving one), "*Diener*" (servant) and "*Dienen*" (service).

obedience to the objective world. The one who only serves the cause, devotes himself entirely to it, has true freedom. And the cause among thinkers was—*reason*, that which, like church and state, gives universal laws, and through the *thought of humanity* puts the individual human being in chains. It determines what is "true", which one then has to follow. No "more rational" people than the honest servants, who are for the moment called good bourgeois citizens as servants of the state.

Whether you're filthy rich or dirt poor—the state of the bourgeoisie leaves that up to you—all you must do is have a "good attitude." It demands this of you and considers its most urgent task to be to establish this in all. This is why it will protect you from "evil enticements," by keeping the "evil-minded" in check and silencing their thrilling speeches under the censor's slash or press penalties and behind prison walls, and, on the other hand, will appoint people of "good attitude" to be censors, and in every way try to exert a *moral influence* on you, "the well-disposed and well-meaning" people. If it has made you deaf to evil enticements, it then opens your ears again all the more diligently to good enticements.

With the time of the *bourgeoisie* that of *liberalism* begins. People want to see the "rational," the "timely," established everywhere. The following definition of liberalism, which is supposed to be said in its honor, describes it perfectly: "Liberalism is nothing other than rational knowledge applied to our current conditions."[117] Its goal is a "rational order," a "moral behavior," a "limited freedom," not anarchy, lawlessness, ownness. But if reason rules, then the *person* is defeated. For a long time, art has not only taken the ugly into account, but considered it necessary to art's existence, and taken it up into itself; it needs the villain, etc. Also in the religious realm, the most extreme liberals go so far that they want to see the most religious person regarded as a citizen, i.e., the religious villain; they want to hear nothing more of heresy trials. But no one is to rebel against the "rational law"; otherwise he faces the harshest punishment. They do not want a free

117 ▸ Carl Witt (anonymously) "*Preußen seit der Einsetzung Arndts bis zur Absetzung Bauers*," in Georg Herwegh (editor), *Einundzwnzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), pp. 12-13.

movement and currency of the person or of me, but of reason, i.e., a rulership of reason, a rulership. The liberals are *zealots*, not exactly for the faith, for God, but for reason, their master. They'll tolerate no impertinence, and therefore no self-development and self-determination; they *impose their will* despite the most absolute rulers.[118]

"Political freedom": what is one to understand by this? Perhaps the freedom of the individual from the state and its laws? No, on the contrary, it is the bondage of the individual in the state and to the state's laws. But why "freedom"? Because one is no longer separated from the state by intermediaries, but stands in direct and immediate relationship to it; because one is a citizen, not the subject of another, not even the king as a person, but only in his capacity as "head of state." Political freedom, this fundamental doctrine of liberalism, is nothing other than a second phase of Protestantism, and runs quite parallel to "religious freedom."[119] Or could one maybe understand the latter as a freedom from religion? Anything but that. Only the freedom from intermediaries is supposed to be expressed in this, the freedom from mediating priests, the abolition of the "laity," and so, the direct and unmediated relationship to religion or God. Only on the condition that one has religion can one enjoy freedom of religion; freedom of religion doesn't mean being without religion, but religious intimacy, unmediated intercourse with God. For anyone who's "religiously free," religion is an affair of the heart; it is to him his *own affair*, it is to him a matter of sacred earnestness. So too for one who's "politically free," the state is a matter of sacred earnestness; it is his heart's affair, his chief affair, his own affair.

Political freedom means this: that the *polis*, the state, is free; religious freedom this: that religion is free, just as freedom of conscience indicates that conscience is free; thus, it does not that I am free from state, from religion, from conscience, or that I am *rid* of them. It does

118 Byington's rather different translation doesn't fit the German words. I suspect that Stirner was not comparing "liberal" rulers to absolute rulers, but was saying that even where supposedly "absolute rulers" still reigned, the liberals were imposing their will.

119 ▸ Louis Blanc says at the time of the restoration: "*Le protestantisme devint le fond des idées et des moeurs*" ["Protestantism became the basis of ideas and customs"], *Histoire des dix ans. 1830-1840*, volume I (Paris,1841), p. 138.

not mean *my* freedom, but the freedom of a power that rules and vanquishes me; it means that one of my *oppressors*, like state, religion, conscience, is free. State, religion, conscience, these oppressors, make me a slave, and *their* freedom is *my* slavery. That in this they necessarily follow the principle, "the end sanctifies the means," goes without saying. If the welfare of the state is the end, then war is a sanctified means; if justice is the state's end, murder is a sanctified means, and is called by its sacred name "execution"; the sacred state *makes sacred* everything that is useful to it.

The "individual freedom" over which bourgeois liberalism keeps a jealous watch, does not at all mean a completely free self-determination, through which actions become completely *mine*, but independence from *persons*. One is individually free who is responsible to no *human being*. Taken in this sense—and one is not allowed to understand it in any other way—not only the ruler is individually free, that is, *irresponsible toward human beings* ("before God" he indeed acknowledges he is responsible), but all who are "responsible only to the law." This kind of freedom was won by the revolutionary movement of the century—namely, independence from personal taste, from *tel est notre plaisir*.[120] Therefore, the constitutional prince had to be stripped of all personality, deprived of all individual decision, so that as a person, as an *individual human being*, he does not violate the "individual freedom" of others. The *personal will of the ruler* has disappeared in the constitutional prince; so it is with appropriate feeling that absolute princes resist this. Nonetheless, these very ones want to be "Christian princes" in the best sense. But for this they would have to become a *purely spiritual* power, since the Christian is subject only to the *spirit* ("God is spirit"). The purely spiritual power is consistently represented only by the constitutional prince, he who stands there spiritualized, without any personal significance, to the degree that he can count as a perfect, unearthly "spirit," as an *idea*. The constitutional king is the truly *Christian* king, the genuine consequence of Christian principles. In constitutional monarchy individual rulership—that is, the actual ruler who *wills*—has found its end;

120 "Such is our pleasure." A phrase used by French monarchs when they put a law into effect.

therefore here *individual freedom* prevails, independence from every individual master, from everyone who could command me with a *tel est notre plaisir.* It is the consummate *Christian* life of the state, a spiritualized life.

The bourgeoisie's behavior is *liberal* through and through. Every *personal* intrusion into another's sphere outrages the bourgeois sense; if the bourgeois citizen sees that one is dependent on the mood, the pleasure, the will of a human being as individual (i.e., not as authorized by a "higher power"), he immediately makes a show of his liberalism and shrieks about "arbitrariness." In short, the bourgeois citizen asserts his freedom from what people call *orders* (*ordonnance*): "No one has any business giving me—orders!" *Order* has the significance that what I am supposed to do is another human being's will, whereas *law* does not express a personal authority of another. The freedom of the bourgeoisie is the freedom or independence from the will of another person, so-called personal or individual freedom; because being personally free means being only so free that no other person can dispose of what's mine, or that what I may or may not do does not depend on the personal decision of another. Among others, freedom of the press is one such freedom of liberalism, liberalism only fighting against the constraint of censorship as personal caprice, but otherwise showing itself extremely inclined and willing to tyrannize through "press laws"; in other words, the bourgeois liberals want freedom to write *for themselves;* because, since they are law-abiding, they will not through their writings be forfeited to the law. Only liberal, i.e., legal, material should be allowed to get printed; otherwise the press laws threaten press penalties. If one sees personal freedom ensured, one doesn't notice at all how, if it comes to anything beyond this, the most glaring lack of freedom becomes dominant. Because one is indeed rid of *orders,* and "no one has any business giving us orders," but one has become all the more submissive to the—*law.* Now one is enslaved in due legal form.

In the bourgeois-state there are only "free people" who are forced into thousands of things (for example, into deference, into a confession of faith, and the like). But what does that matter? It's only the state, the law, not any human being, that forces them!

What does the bourgeoisie want from its railing against every personal order, every order not founded on the "cause," on "reason," etc.? It simply fights in the interest of the "cause" against the rule of "persons"! But the cause of the spirit is the rational, the good, the lawful, etc.; that is the "good cause." The bourgeoisie wants an *impersonal* ruler.

Furthermore, if the principle is this, that only the cause[121] should rule the human being, namely, the cause of morality, the cause of legality, etc., then no personal cutting off of one by another may be authorized either (as formerly, for example, the bourgeois was cut off from aristocratic offices, the nobleman from the bourgeois trades, etc.); in other words, *free competition* must occur. Only through the thing can one cut another off (the rich, for example, cutting off the penniless through money, a thing), not as a person. From now on only one lordship counts, the lordship of the state; personally no one is any longer lord of another. Even at birth the children belong to the state, and to the parents only in the name of the state—which, for example, does not tolerate infanticide, requires the christening of the child, etc.

But all the state's children count as completely equal to it ("bourgeois or political equality"), and they may see to it themselves to deal with each other; they may *compete*.

Free competition means nothing other than that every man can show himself, assert himself, fight against the others. Of course, the feudal party obstructed this, since its existence depended on non-competition. The struggles during the Restoration period in France had no other content than this: that the bourgeoisie was fighting for free competition, and the feudalists were trying to bring back the guild system.

Now free competition has won, and it had to win against the guild system. (For more on this, see below.)

If the revolution lost its way in a reaction, this only brought to

121 In this passage, Stirner plays on the various meanings of "*Sache*" and makes a significant point in this wordplay. Here "cause" is the most appropriate translation, but a few sentences later he uses it in the sense of a "thing"—specifically money, thus pointing out that the apparent rule by a cause actually works out as the rule of *things* over actual flesh and blood individuals.

light what the revolution *actually was*. Because every pursuit passes into reaction when it *has time to reflect*, and storms forward in the original action only so long as it is a *frenzy*, an "unreflecting impetuosity." "Reflection" will always be the cue of the reaction, because reflection sets limits, and liberates what's actually wanted, that is, the principle, from the initial "lack of restraint" and "lack of restrictions." Wild lads, bragging students, who set aside all considerations, are *genuine* philistines, since with them, as with the philistines, considerations form the content of their activities; it's just that as braggarts they rebel and relate negatively to the considerations, but later, as philistines, they surrender themselves to these considerations and relate positively to them. In both cases, all their thought and action revolves around "considerations," but the philistine is *reactionary* against the lads, he's the wild fellow who's had time to reflect, as the latter is the unreflecting philistine. Everyday experience confirms the truth of this transformation, and shows how the blowhards age into gray-haired philistines.

So also the so-called reaction in Germany proves that it was only the *reflective* continuation of the warlike jubilation of freedom.

The revolution was not directed against *the existent*, but against *this existent*, against a *particular* existence. It did away with *this* ruler, not *the* ruler; on the contrary, the French were most relentlessly ruled; it killed the old vicious rulers, but wanted to grant the new virtuous rulers a secure existence, i.e., it merely replaced vice with virtue. (Vice and virtue, for their part, again only differ like a wild lad from a philistine.) And so on.

Up to the present day, the revolutionary principle has gone no further than to fight against *this or that* existent, to be *reformative*. As much as is improved, as strongly as "reflective progress" may be held to, there is always a *new master* set up in the old one's place, and the overthrow is a reconstruction. It remains at the distinction of the young philistine from the old one. The revolution began in a bourgeois way, with the uprising of the third estate, the middle class; in a bourgeois way it dries up. The *individual human being*—and this alone is *the human being*—does not become free, but the *bourgeois,* the *citoyen,* the *political* human being, who for that very reason is not

the human being, but a specimen of the human species, and more particularly a specimen of the bourgeois species, a *free bourgeois citizen.*

In the revolution, it was not the *individual* who acted in world history,[122] but a *people;* the *nation,* the sovereign nation, wanted to bring everything about. An imaginary I, which the nation is, appears active; i.e., the individuals hand themselves over as tools of this idea and act as "bourgeois citizens."

The bourgeoisie has its power, and at the same time its limits, in *state constitutional law,* in a charter, in a legal or "legitimate" prince, who is himself guided by, and rules according to, "rational laws"; in short, in *legality*. The period of the bourgeoisie is ruled by the British spirit of legality. An assembly of feudal estates is always recalling that its authority goes only so far, and that it is called at all only through favor and can get thrown out again through disfavor. It always reminds itself of its—*calling.* One certainly can't deny that my father begot me; but now that I have been begotten, surely his intentions in begetting don't concern me at all, and whatever he may have *called* me to, I do what I myself will. So even a called assembly of estates—the French assembly at the beginning of the revolution—quite rightly recognized that it was independent from the caller. It *existed,* and it would have been stupid if it did not assert the right of existence, but rather imagined it was dependent, as on a father. The called one no longer has to ask "What did the caller want when he created me?" but rather "What do I want once I have followed the call?" Not the caller, not the delegates, not the charter according to which their meeting was called together, nothing will be a sacred inviolable power to him. He is *entitled* to everything that is in his power; he will know no restrictive "entitlement," will not want to be loyal. If one could ever expect such a thing of chambers at all, this would bring about a completely *egoistic* chamber, separated form all umbilical cords and ruthless. But chambers are always submissive, and so one cannot be surprised if so much half-way or undecided, i.e., hypocritical, "egoism" spreads in them.

122 The German word, "*weltgeschichtlich,*" could also be translated "world-historically" after the fashion of certain Marxist academics, but I see no need to imitate Marxist academics in using such pretentious terms. However, those readers familiar with that term may want to be aware of this.

The members of the estates are to remain within the *limits* that are mapped out for them by the charter, by the king's will, and the like. If they will not or cannot do that, they are supposed to "withdraw". What dutiful person could act otherwise, could put himself, his conviction, and his will *first*; who could be so immoral as to want to assert *himself*, even if the corporate body[123] and everything were to go to ruin because of it? One carefully keeps within the limits of one's *authority*; of course, one must stay within the limits of his *power* in any case, because no one can do more than he can. "My power, or more precisely my powerlessness, would be my sole limit, but authority would be only obligatory statutes? Should I profess this view that overthrows all? No, I'm a law-abiding citizen!"

The bourgeoisie professes a morality that is most closely connected with its essence. Its first demand in this regard is that one should carry on a solid business, an honest trade, and lead a moral life. To it, the swindler, the whore, the thief, robber and murderer, the gambler, the penniless person without a job, the reckless one, are all immoral. The honest bourgeois citizen describes the feeling against these "immoral" people as his "deepest indignation." All of them lack a stable residence, the *solidity* of business, a solid, respectable life, a steady income, etc., in short, because their existence does not rest on a *secure basis*, they are among the dangerous individuals or lone drifters, the dangerous *proletariat;* they are "individual troublemakers" who offer no "guarantees" and have "nothing to lose," and so nothing to risk. The formation of family ties, for example, *binds* the human being, the one tied down holds to a pledge, can be understood; not so with the prostitute. The gambler stakes everything on the game, ruins himself and others—no guarantee. One can include all who appear suspicious, hostile, and dangerous to the bourgeois citizen in the name "vagabonds"; every vagabond way of living displeases him. Because there are also intellectual vagabonds to whom the ancestral home of their fathers seems too cramped and oppressive for them to be willing to content themselves with the limited space anymore; instead of

123 "*Körperschaft*" can refer to a corporation in the business sense, but also to a governing or "political" body. The essential aspect here is that it is a *collective* body and operates as an authority over the individuals in it.

staying within the bounds of a moderate way of thinking, and taking as inviolable truth what grants consolation and reassurance to thousands, they leap over all boundaries of tradition and run wild with their impudent criticism and untamed skepticism, these extravagant vagabonds. They form the class of the vagrant, restless, changeable, i.e., the proletariat, and when they give voice to their unsettled essence, they are called "unruly guys."

The so-called proletariat, or pauperism, has that wide of a sense. How mistaken one would be if one credited the bourgeoisie with desiring to do away with poverty (pauperism) to the best of its abilities. On the contrary, the good bourgeois citizen helps himself with the incomparably comforting conviction that "the goods of fortune are unequally distributed now and will always remain so—according to God's wise decision." The poverty that surrounds him in every alley doesn't disturb the true bourgeois any further than that at most he compensates for it by throwing alms, or provides work and food for an "honest and useful" lad. But he feels his quiet enjoyment clouded so much the more by *discontented* poverty, *seeking for innovation*, by those poor people who no longer behave quietly and endure, but begin to *run wild* and get restless. Lock up the vagabond, throw the troublemaker into the darkest dungeon! He wants to "arouse discontent and stir people up against existing regulations" in the state—stone him, stone him!

But from these malcontents, in particular, a reasoning comes out somewhat as follows: it need not matter to the "good bourgeois citizens" who protects them and their principles, whether an absolute or a constitutional king, a republic, etc., so long as they are protected. And what is their principle whose protector they always "love"? Not that of work; nor that of birth. But that of *mediocrity*, of the happy medium: a bit of birth and a bit of work, i.e., an *interest-yielding possession*. Possession here is the fixed, the given, the inherited (birth), the interest is the exertion on it (work), thus *working capital*. Only no excess, no ultra, no radicalism! Birthright, certainly, but only hereditary possessions; work, certainly, but little or none of one's own, but rather the work of capital and of the—submissive workers.

If an age lies under an error, some always gain an advantage from

this, while the others suffer from it. In the Middle Ages, it was the general error among Christians to think that the church must have all power or supremacy on earth; the hierarchs believed no less in this "truth" than the laypeople, and both were spellbound in the same error. But from it the hierarchs had the *advantage* of power, and the laypeople had the *suffering* of submission. But as the saying goes, "In suffering, one grows smart"; so finally the laypeople grew smart, and no longer believed in the medieval "truth." A similar relationship is found between the bourgeoisie and the working class. The bourgeois and the worker believe in the "truth" of *money*; those who don't possess it believe in it no less than those who possess it; thus, the laypeople like the priests.

"Money rules the world" is the cornerstone of the bourgeois era. A dispossessed aristocrat and a dispossessed worker are, as "starving wretches," of no significance for political advantage; birth and work don't do it, but *money*[124] gives *advantage*.[125] The possessors rule, but from among the dispossessed, the state trains up its "servants," to whom it gives money (a salary), in proportion to how much they rule (govern) in its name.

I receive everything from the state. Do I have anything without the state's approval? What I have without this approval, it takes away from me as soon as it discovers the lack of a "legal title." So don't I have everything by its grace, its approval?

The bourgeoisie is based on this alone—the *legal title*. The bourgeois is what he is through *state protection*, through the grace of the state. He would have to be afraid of losing everything if the power of the state were broken.

But how is it with one who has nothing to lose, how is it with the proletarian? Since he has nothing to lose, he doesn't need state protection for his "nothing." On the contrary, he could gain if that state protection were taken away from the protégés.

Therefore, the non-possessor would view the state as the protector of the possessor, that privileges the latter, but only sucks the non-possessor dry. The state is a—*bourgeois state*, it is the status of

124 "*Geld*."
125 "*Geltung*."

the bourgeoisie. It protects the human being not according to his work, but according to his obedience ("loyalty"), namely, according to whether he enjoys and administers the rights that the state entrusts to him in accordance with the will, i.e., the laws, of the state.

Under the regime of the bourgeoisie, the workers always fall into the hands of the possessors, i.e., of those who have any bit of state property[126] (and everything that can be possessed is state property, belongs to the state, and is only a fief of the individual) at their disposal, especially money and land; therefore, into the hands of the capitalists. The worker can't utilize his work according to the measure of the value it has for the one enjoying its result. "Work is badly paid!" The capitalist has the greatest profit from it. —Only the work of those who enhance the glory and the *power*[127] of the state, the work of high state *servants*, is well, and more than well, paid. The state pays well so that its "good bourgeois citizens," the possessors, can pay badly without danger; through good pay, it secures for itself its servants, from which it forms a protecting power, a "police" (to the police belong soldiers, officials of all kinds, i.e., of justice, education, etc.—in short, the whole "machinery of state")[128] for the "good bourgeois citizens," and the "good bourgeois citizens" gladly pay high taxes to it in order to pay so much lower wages to their workers.

But the class of workers, because they are unprotected in what they essentially are (since they don't enjoy state protection as workers, but as subjects of the state they have a share in the enjoyment of the

126 "*Staatsgut*" rather than "*Eigentum*," thus, specifically a reference to property only in the economic sense.

127 In this instance "*Herrschaft*," specifically *ruling* power, but it is a clear reference to the phrase "the power and the glory."

128 In David Leopold's edition of *The Ego and Its Own* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), he has a footnote (note 137, page 351) explaining that the term "*Polizei*" in 19th century Germany had a much broader meaning than the current English "police". If this is true, it actually makes Stirner's parenthesis odd and unnecessary, since all of his German readers (and anyone else familiar with such German usage) would already assume that soldiers and officialdom were included in the term. But even if Leopold is correct and isn't pursuing some agenda, I think Stirner did intend for his readers to recognize that *all* state officials, whether technically police or not, act to enforce state control, and so act as police precisely in the "narrow" sense that you and I use it today. A "welfare state" in Leopold's sense *is* a police state, as are all states.

police, a so-called legal protection), remains a hostile power against this state, this state of possessors, this "bourgeois monarchy." Its principle, work, is not recognized according to its *value*; it is exploited[129], a *spoil of war*[130] of the possessors, the enemy.

The workers have the most enormous power in their hands, and if one day they became truly aware of it and used it, then nothing could resist them; they would only have to stop work and look upon the products of work as their own and enjoy them. This is the meaning of the labor unrest that is looming here and there.

The state is founded on the—*slavery of labor*. If *labor* becomes *free*, the state is lost.

1.3.2 Social Liberalism

We are freeborn human beings and wherever we look we see ourselves made into servants of egoists! Shall we therefore also become egoists? Heaven forbid! We would prefer to make egoists impossible! We want to make them all into "paupers"; all will have nothing, so that "all may have."

—So say the socialists[131].

Who is this person that you call "all"?—It is "society"!—But then is it a bodily being?—*We* are its body!—You all[132]? You all are not yourselves a body—you, mister, are certainly a bodily being; you too, madam, and you; but you all together are only bodies, not a body. Therefore, society would certainly have bodies at its service, but not any body of its own. Like the "nation" of the politicians, it will turn out to be nothing but a "spirit," its body only a sham.

In political liberalism, human freedom is freedom from *persons*, from personal rule, from the *master;* the safeguarding of each

129 "*ausgebeuten.*"

130 "*Kriegsbeute.*"

131 I have chosen, like Byington, to translate "*Socialen*" as "socialists" here. It, in fact, has the broader meaning of anyone who is "socially conscious," anyone who places *society* above individual human beings. But the ideas Stirner critiques here seem to be specifically *socialistic,* not merely "socially conscious."

132 In this passage Stirner uses "*Ihr*," the informal plural form of you; thus, "you as a group," and "*Du*," the informal singular you, thus, "you as a specific individual" to make his distinction.

individual person against other persons, personal freedom.

No one has any orders to give; the law alone gives orders.

But though the persons have become *equal,* their *possessions* still haven't. And the poor person still *needs the rich person,* the rich person still needs the poor person: the former needs the rich person's money, as the latter needs the poor person's work. So no one needs the other as a *person,* but rather he needs him as a *giver,* thus as one who has something to give, as holder or possessor. So what he *has,* makes the *Man.* And in *having,* or in "possessions," people are not equal.

Consequently, social liberalism concludes that *no one must have,* as according to political liberalism *no one was supposed to give orders;* in other words, as in that instance the *state* alone got the command, so now *society* alone gets the possessions.

By protecting each one's person and property against the other, the state separates them from one another; each *is* his part for himself and *has* his part for himself. The one for whom what he is and has is enough, finds this state of things to be worth his while; but one who wants to be and have more looks around for this more, and finds it in the power of other *persons.* Here he comes upon a contradiction: as a person no one takes second place to another, and yet one person *has* what another doesn't have but would like to have. So he concludes that the one person is more than the other, because the former has what he needs, and the latter doesn't have it; the former is a rich person, the latter is a poor person.

Now he asks himself further, should we let what we rightly buried come back to life again, should we let this inequality that was restored in a roundabout way hold? No, on the contrary, we must thoroughly bring to an end what was only half accomplished. Our freedom from another's person still lacks the freedom from the things the other's person can command, from the things he has in his personal power, in short, from "personal property." So let's do away with *personal property.* Let no one have anything anymore, let everyone be a—pauper. Let property be *impersonal*, let it belong to—*society.*

Before the supreme *ruler,* the sole *commander*, we had all become equal, equal persons, i.e., zeros.

Before the supreme *proprietor* we all become equal—*paupers.* For

now, one is still in another's estimation a "pauper," a "have-not"; but then this estimation ceases. We are all paupers, and as the overall mass of communist society we could call ourselves "ragged rabble."

When the proletarian will have actually established his intended "society" where the gap between rich and poor is to be eliminated, then he'll *be* a pauper, because then he'll think it's something to be a pauper, and might raise "pauper" up enough to be an honorable form of address, as the revolution did with the word "citizen." Pauper is his ideal; we are all to become paupers.

This is the second robbery of the "personal" in the interest of "humanity." Neither command nor property is left to the individual; the state took the former, society the latter.

Because in society, the most oppressive evils make themselves felt to the oppressed in particular, and so the members of the lower regions of society think they've found the fault in society, and make it their task to discover the *right society*. It's just the old phenomenon, that one first seeks the fault in everything but *oneself,* thus, in the state, in the self-seeking of the rich, etc., who, nonetheless, have our fault to thank for their existence.

The reflections and conclusions of communism look very simple. As things lie at this time, under current state relations, some, and they are the majority, stand at a disadvantage to others, the minority. In this *state* of affairs that latter are in a *state of prosperity,* and the former in a *state of need.* Thus, the present *state* of affairs, the state itself, must be done away with. And what in its place? Instead of scattered prosperity—a *general prosperity*, a *prosperity for all.*

Through the revolution, the bourgeoisie became almighty, and all inequality was abolished by raising or lowering everyone to the dignity of a *bourgeois citizen:* the common man—raised, the aristocrat, lowered; the *third* estate became the sole estate, namely, the estate of—*state citizens.* Now communism replies: Our dignity and our essence do not consist in our all being—the *equal children* of our mother, the state, all born with an equal claim to her love and protection, but in all of us being *for each other.* This is our equality or in this we are *the same,* that I as well as you and all of you, are active and working for each other; thus in that each of us is a *worker.* In this, what

matters is not what we are *for the state,* namely citizens, thus not our *bourgeois citizenship,* but what we are *for each other,* that each of us only exists through the other, who, since he takes care of my needs, at the same time sees his own satisfied by me. He works, for example, for my clothing (tailor), I for his amusement (comedy-writer, rope-dancer), he for my food (farmer), I for his instruction (scholar, etc.). So our *being of the working class* is our dignity and our—equality.

What advantage does being of the middle classes[133] bring us? Burdens![134] And how highly is our work estimated? As low as possible! But all the same, work is our sole value: the best thing about us is that we are *workers,* that is our meaning in the world; and this is why it must also become our advantage and show itself to advantage. What can you show us as an alternative? Surely only—*work* as well. Only for work or services do we owe you a recompense, not for your mere existence; also not for what you are *for yourselves,* but only for what you are *for us*. How do you have claims on us? Perhaps through your high birth, etc.? No, only by what you do that is desirable or useful to us. So then let it be this way: We are willing to be worth to you only so much as we do for you, but you are to be held likewise by us. *Services* determine worth, those services that are worth something to us, thus, *the work for each other*, *the work for the common good*. Let each one be in the other's eyes a *worker.* The one who does something useful is second to none, or—all workers (workers, of course, in the sense of workers "for the common good," i.e., communistic workers) are equal. But, since the worker is worthy of his hire,[135] let wages be equal too.

As long as faith was enough for the honor and dignity of human beings, no objection could be made against any work, however strenuous, if it only did not hinder a person in his faith. However, now that everyone is supposed to develop himself into a human being,

133 "*Bürgertum*," the bourgeoisie in the broader sense that includes the petite bourgeoisie—small shop-owners, self-employed craftspeople, etc., thus "the middle classes." Byington translates it as "citizenship," and "*Bürger*" is sometimes used for "citizen." But "*Bürgertum*" has more specific class connotations, and those seem to be significant in this passage.

134 Or "Taxes!" The German word "*Lasten*" translates most literally as "burdens," but is used specifically to refer to taxes and similar expenses.

135 See Luke 10:7.

relegating human beings to machine-like work amounts to the same thing as slavery. If a factory worker has to make himself dead tired for twelve hours and more, he is kept from becoming a human being. All work should have the aim of satisfying the person. Therefore, he must also become a *master* in it, i.e., be able to create it as a totality. One who only puts on the heads, only draws the wire, etc., in a pin factory, works mechanically, like a machine; he remains a dabbler, doesn't become a master; his work cannot *satisfy* him, it can only *tire him out*. Taken for itself, his work is nothing, has no purpose *in itself,* is nothing complete in itself; he only works into another's hand, and is *used* (exploited) by this other. For this worker in another's service there is no *enjoyment of a cultivated spirit,* at most, crude amusements; indeed, culture is closed off to him. To be a good Christian, one needs only to *believe,* and that can be done under the most oppressive conditions. Thus, the Christian-minded are only concerned with the piety of the oppressed workers, their patience, submission, etc. The downtrodden classes could endure all their miseries only so long as they were *Christians;* because Christianity does not let their grumbling and their outrage arise. Now the *pacifying* of desires is no longer enough, but their *satiation* is demanded. The bourgeoisie has proclaimed the gospel of the *enjoyment of the world,* of material enjoyment, and is now surprised that this doctrine finds adherents among us poor people; it has shown that not faith and poverty, but culture and possessions, make one blessed; we proletarians also understand this.

The bourgeoisie liberated us from the command and arbitrariness of individuals. But the arbitrariness that springs from the conjuncture of conditions, and which could be called the contingency of circumstances, remained; favoring *fortune* and those "favored by fortune" still remain.

For example, when a branch of industry goes under and thousands of workers lose their livelihood, people are fair-minded enough to acknowledge that the individual isn't to blame, but that "the evil lies in the conditions."

Let's change the conditions then, but let's change them thoroughly, and in such a way that their contingency becomes powerless and a

law! Let us no longer be slaves of chance! Let's create a new order that puts an end to *fluctuations*. Then let this order be sacred!

Earlier one had to please the *lords* to come to something; after the revolution the word was "grab *fortune!*" Fortune-hunting or games of chance: bourgeois life began in this. Along with that then, the requirement that anyone who gains something doesn't recklessly put it at stake again.

A strange and yet utterly natural contradiction. Competition, in which bourgeois or political life solely operates, is a game of chance through and through, from stock market speculation all the way down to applications for official positions, the hunt for customers, the job search, the pursuit of promotions and decorations, the rummaging of the haggling junkman, etc. If one succeeds in pushing out and outbidding his rivals, then the "lucky throw" is made; because it must already be taken as a stroke of luck that the winner feels himself gifted with an ability, even if cultivated with the most careful diligence, against which the others don't know how to rise, so that—none more gifted are found. And now those who pursue their daily lives in the midst of these changing fortunes without doing badly from it are seized with the most moral indignation when their own principle appears in its most naked form and "wreaks misfortune" as—a game of chance. The game of chance is just too clear, too unveiled a competition, and, like any definite nakedness, offends the honorable sense of shame.

The socialists want to put an end to this activity of chance,[136] and to form a society in which people are not longer dependent on *fortune*, but free.

In the most natural way this aspiration expresses itself first as hatred of the "unfortunate" toward the "fortunate," i.e., of those for whom fortune has done little or nothing toward those for whom it has done everything.

But actually the resentment is not aimed at the fortunate, but at *fortune,* this rotten spot of the bourgeoisie.

136 "*Ungefährs*" is a noun form of the adjective "*ungefähr*" which would translate as "approximate" or "rough" in the sense of a "rough estimate." So it relates to guessing. The implication here is that socialists want to put an end to guesswork in life.

Since the communists first declare free activity as the human essence, they, like all work-day ways of thinking, need a Sunday; like all material aspirations, they need a God, an uplifting[137] and edification alongside their mindless[138] "work."

That the communist sees the human being, the brother, in you is only the Sunday side of communism. According to the workday side, he doesn't by any means take you as a human being as such, but as a human worker, as a working person. The liberal principle is there in the first view; illiberality is hidden in the second. If you were a "lazybones," he would certainly not fail to recognize the human being in you, but would strive to cleanse it, as a "lazy human being," from laziness, and to convert you to the *faith* that work is the human being's "destiny and calling."

Therefore he shows a double face: with the one he takes care that the spiritual human being is satisfied; with the other he looks around for means for the material of bodily human being. He gives the human being a twofold job, one task of material and one of spiritual acquisition.

The bourgeoisie had *openly laid out* spiritual and material goods, and left it to each one to reach out for them if he wanted to.

Communism actually provides them to each one, imposes them on him, and forces him to acquire them. It takes seriously the idea that, because only spiritual and material goods make us human beings, we must acquire these goods without protest in order to be a human being. The bourgeoisie made acquisition open; communism forces acquisition, and recognizes only the *acquirer*, the tradesperson. It's not enough that the trade is open, you must *take it up.*

So the only thing left to criticism is to show that the acquisition of these goods by no means makes us human beings.

With the liberal commandment that everyone should make a human being of himself, or make himself a human being, the need was posited that everyone must gain time for this work of humanization, i.e., that it would become possible for every one to work on *himself.*

137 "*Erhebung*" can also mean an "uprising," and Stirner may well have meant this as a wordplay since communists did call for revolution.

138 "*Geistlos*," thus, also "spiritless" or "unspiritual."

The bourgeoisie believed it had arranged this if it gave everything human over to competition, but entitled the individual to everything human. "Each may strive after everything!"

Social liberalism finds that the matter isn't settled with the "may"; because may means only that it is forbidden to no one, but not that it is made possible for every one. It, therefore, claims that the bourgeoisie is liberal only with the mouth and in words, highly illiberal in deed. On its part, it wants to give all of the *means* to be able to work on ourselves.

The principle of fortune or competition is certainly outdone by the principle of work. But at the same time the worker, in his awareness that the essential thing about him is "the worker," keeps himself away from egoism and submits to the supremacy of a workers' society, as the bourgeois citizen clung with devotion to the competition-state. The lovely dream of "social duty" is still being dreamed. People think again that society *gives* what we need, and we are therefore *obligated* to it, owe it everything.[139] They still remain at the point of wanting to *serve* a "supreme giver of all good." That society is no *I* at all, which could give, lend, or grant, but an instrument or means from which we might draw benefit; that we have no social obligations, but merely interests in pursuit of which society has to serve us; that we owe society no sacrifice, but if we sacrifice anything, sacrifice it to ourselves: the socialists don't think about this, because they—as liberals—are trapped in the religious principle and zealously strive after—a sacred society, as the state was up to now.

Society, from which we have everything, is a new master, a new phantasm, a new "supreme being," which "takes us into its service and duty"!

A more detailed assessment of political as well as social liberalism can only find its place further on. For now we skip this in order to bring them before the tribunal of humane or critical liberalism.

139 ▸ Proudhon cries out, for example, "In industry as in science, the publication of an invention is the first and most *sacred of duties*," *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou Principes d'organisation politique* (Paris, 1843) p. 414.

1.3.3 Humane Liberalism

Since liberalism completes itself in self-criticizing, "critical" liberalism,[140] in which the critic remains a liberal and doesn't go beyond the principle of liberalism, the human being, this liberalism may preferably be named after the human being and called "humane."

The worker is counted as the most materialistic and egoistic human being. He does nothing at all *for humanity;* he does everything *for himself*, for his welfare.

The bourgeoisie, because it passed the *human being* off as free only by birth, had to leave him in the claws of the inhuman monster (the egoist) for the rest of his life. Therefore, under the regime of political liberalism egoism is an immense field for free utilization.

The worker will *use* society for his *egoistic* aims as the bourgeois uses the state. You still only have an egoistic aim, your welfare! So the humane liberal accuses the socialist. Take up a *purely human interest*—then I will be your companion. "But to this belongs a stronger, more comprehensive consciousness than a *worker's consciousness*." "The worker makes nothing, therefore he has nothing; but he makes nothing, because his work is always one that remains individual, calculated according to his very own wants, day by day."[141] In opposition to this one might consider the following: Gutenberg's work did not remain individual, but brought forth numberless children, and still lives today; it was calculated for the wants of humanity and was an eternal, imperishable work.

Humane consciousness despises both the bourgeois and the worker's consciousness; because the bourgeois is only outraged at vagabonds (at all who have "no definite employment") and their "immorality"; the worker is "disgusted" by the idler ("lazybones") and his "immoral," because mooching and unsocial, principles. To this the humane liberal replies: The unsettled life of many is only your product, philistine! But that you, proletarian, demand the *grind* for

140 Stirner is here referring to the "campaign of pure criticism" carried on by Bruno Bauer and his followers.

141 ▸ Edgar Bauer (written anonymously), review of Flora Tristan, *Union ouvrière* (Paris, 1843), in Bruno Bauer (editor), *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, No. 5, (April 1844).

all, and want to make *drudgery* universal, is a part of the pack mule life you've lived up to now still clinging to you. Certainly you want to ease the drudgery itself by *all* having to drudge equally hard, but only for this reason, that all may gain *leisure* to an equal extent. But what are they supposed to do with their leisure? What does your "society" do so that they'll spend this leisure *humanly*? It must again leave the leisure gained to egoistic taste, and the very gain that your society promotes falls to the egoist, as the gain of the bourgeoisie, the *masterlessness of human beings*, could not be filled with human content by the state, and was therefore left to arbitrary choice.

It is certainly necessary that the human being be masterless; but therefore the egoist should not become master over the human being again, but rather the human being master over the egoist. Certainly the human being must find leisure, but if the egoist takes advantage of it, it will be lost to the human being; therefore you would have to give leisure a human meaning. But you workers also undertake your work from an egoistic impulse, because you want to eat, drink, live; how are you supposed to be less egoistic in your leisure? You only work, because after a day's work is done, revelry (loafing about) is good, and how you while away your leisure time is left to *chance*.

But if every door is to be locked to egoism, one must strive for completely disinterested action, *total* disinterestedness. This alone is human, because only the human being is disinterested; the egoist is always interested.

If we let disinterestedness stand for the time being, we ask: Will you take no interest in anything, not get enthusiastic for anything, not for freedom, for humanity, etc.? "Oh, yes, but that is no egoistic interest, no *interestedness*, but a human, i.e., a—*theoretical* interest, namely, an interest not for an individual or individuals ("all"), but for the *idea*, for *the* human being!"

And you don't notice that you are also only enthusiastic for *your* idea, *your* idea of freedom?

And further, don't you notice that your disinterestedness is again, like religious disinterestedness, a heavenly interestedness? The benefit of the individual certainly leaves you cold, and abstractly you

could cry *fiat libertas, pereat mundus.*[142] You don't worry about the coming day either, and have no serious concerns at all for the individual's desires, neither for your own good living nor that of others; but you just make nothing from all of this, because you are a—dreamer.

Would the humane liberal perhaps be so liberal as to pass everything possible to human beings off as *human*? On the contrary! Indeed he doesn't share the philistine's moral prejudice about the whore, but "that this woman makes her body into a money-making machine"[143] makes her despicable to him as a "human being." He judges: the whore is not a human being, or, so far as a woman is a whore, that far she is inhuman, dehumanized. Further: the Jew, the Christian, the privileged person, the theologian, etc., is not a human being; so far as you are a Jew, etc., you are not a human being. Again the imperious postulate: cast everything distinctive away from you, criticize it away! Don't be a Jew, a Christian, etc., but be a human being, nothing but a human being! Assert your *humanity* against every limiting designation; by means of it, make yourself a human being, and *free* from those limitations; make yourself a "free human being", i.e., recognize humanity as your all-determining *essence*.

I say: You are certainly more than a Jew, more than a Christian, etc., but you are also more than a human being. Those are all ideas, but you exist in the flesh. Do you then think that you can ever become a "human being as such"? Do you think that our descendants will not find any prejudices and limits to get rid of for which our forces were not enough? Or do you perhaps believe that in your fortieth or fiftieth year you'll have come so far that the following days would have nothing more to clear away in you, and that you would be a human being? The people of the future will yet win many freedoms that we don't even miss. What do you need these later freedoms for? If you want to regard yourself as nothing before you've become a human being, you would have to wait until the "last judgment," until the day that the human being, or humanity, will have attained perfection. But since you'll surely die before that, where is your victory prize?

142 "Let there be freedom, even if the world should perish."

143 ▸ Edgar Bauer (anonymously), "*Béraud über die Freudenmädchen*," a review of F. F. A. Béraud, *Les filles publiques de Paris et la police qui les régit*, 2 volumes (Paris and Leipzig, 1839), in *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, no. 5 (April 1844), p. 26.

So rather, turn the matter around, and tell yourself: *I am a human being!* I don't need to first produce the human being in me, because it already belongs to me, like all my qualities.

But, the critic asks, how can one be a Jew and a human being at the same time? In the first place, I answer, one cannot be either a Jew or a human being at all, if "one" and Jew or human being are to mean the same thing; "one" always reaches beyond those designations, and let Isaacs be ever so Jewish, a Jew, nothing but a Jew, he can never be, simply because he is *this* Jew. In the second place, as a Jew, one certainly can't be a human being, if being a human being means not being anything special. But in the third place—and this is what matters—as a Jew, I can be entirely what I—*can* be. From Samuel or Moses[144] and others, you hardly expect that they were supposed to have raised themselves above Judaism, although you must say that they were not yet "human beings." They simply were what they could be. Is it different with present day Jews? Because you have discovered the idea of humanity, does it follow from this that every Jew can become a convert to it? If he can, he doesn't fail to do so, and if he fails to, then—he can't. What does your unreasonable demand, what does the *call* to be a human being which you issue to him, concern him?

In the "human society" that the humane liberal promises, nothing "special" which one or the other has should ever find recognition, nothing that has the character of "private" should ever have value. In this way the circle of liberalism, which has its good principle in the human being and human freedom, and its evil principle in egoism and everything private, its God in the former, its devil in the latter, rounds itself out completely; and if the special or private person lost his value in the "state" (no personal prerogative), if special (private) property ceased to be recognized in the "workers' or paupers' society," so in the "human society" everything special or private will be taken out of consideration; and when "pure criticism" will have completed its hard work, then one will know what everything private is, and what

144 A reference to the biblical Samuel and Moses, symbolic here as lawgivers to the Hebrew people, and so central to the formation of the Jewish religion and culture.

one "pierced with the sense of his nothingness" will—have to let stand.

Because state and society are not enough for humane liberalism, it negates them both and at the same time keeps them both. So at one time it says that the task of the day is "not a political, but a social task," and then again, the "free state" is promised for the future. In truth, "human society" is both the most universal state and the most universal society. Only against the limited state is it claimed that it makes too much fuss about spiritual private interests (for example, people's religious beliefs), and against limited society that it makes too much of material private interests. Both are supposed to leave private interests to private people, and, as human society, concern themselves solely with universal human interests.

The politicians, intending to abolish *personal will,* self-will or arbitrariness, didn't notice that through *property*[145] our *self-will* maintained a safe place of refuge.

The socialists, also taking away *property*, fail to observe that this assures itself a continued existence in *ownness*. Are only money and goods a property then, or is every view my thing, a thing of my own?

So every view must be abolished or made impersonal. The person is entitled to no view, but as self-will was transferred to the state, property to society, so the view must also be transferred to something *universal*, "the human being," and thus become a universal human view.

If the view goes on existing, then I have *my* God (indeed God only exists as "my God"; he is a view or my "faith); and so *my* faith, my religion, my thoughts, my ideals. Therefore, a universal human faith must arise, the "*fanaticism for freedom.*" This would indeed be a faith that corresponded to the "human essence," and because only the human being is reasonable (you and I can be very unreasonable!), a reasonable faith.

As self-will and property become *powerless*, so must ownness or egoism in general.

In this supreme development of "the free human being," egoism, ownness, is fought on principle, and such subordinate aims as the

145 In this passage, Stirner is emphasizing the "own" ("*Eigen*"): "*Eigentum*" (property in the broadest sense), "*Eigenwille*" (self-will), "*Eigenheit*" (ownness, particularity).

social "welfare" of the socialists, etc., vanish before the sublime "idea of humanity." Everything that is not a "universal human thing" is something distinct, satisfies only some or one; or if it satisfies all, it does this to them only as individuals, not as human beings, and is therefore called an "egoistic thing."

For the socialists, *welfare* is still the highest goal, as free *contention* was the agreeable thing to the political liberals; now welfare is also free, and whoever wants to have it may get it, just as whoever wanted to enter into contention (competition) could choose to do so.

But to take part in contention you need only be *bourgeois*; to take part in welfare you need only be *workers*. Neither is synonymous with "human being." It is only "truly well" with the human being when he is also "intellectually free!" Because the human being is mind, therefore all powers that are alien to him, the mind—all superhuman, heavenly, inhuman powers—must be overthrown, and the name "human" must be above every name.

So at this end of the modern age (the age of the moderns), there returns as the main point, what had been the main point at its beginning: "intellectual freedom."

To the communist in particular the humane liberal says: If society prescribes your activity to you, this is indeed free from the influence of the individual, i.e., the egoist, but it doesn't therefore need to be a *purely human* activity, nor do you need to be a complete organ of humanity. What sort of activity society demands of you indeed still remains *contingent*; it could hire you to work on a temple and the like, or, even if not this, you might still be active on your own impulse for some foolishness, and so inhumanity; even more, you actually only work to nourish yourself, in general to live, for dear life's sake, not for the glorification of humanity. Consequently, free activity is achieved only when you make yourself free from all stupidity, from everything non-human, i.e., egoistic (belonging to the individual, not to the human being in the individual), eliminate all untrue thoughts that darken the human or the idea of humanity—in short, when you are not merely unhampered in your activity, but also the content of your activity is only human, and you live and work only for humanity. But this is not the case so long as the goal of your striving is only your

welfare and that of all; what you do for the society of paupers is not yet anything done for "human society."

Work alone doesn't make you a human being, because it is something formal and its object is contingent; but it depends on who you, the one working, are. After all, you can work from an egoistic (material) impulse, merely to provide yourself with nourishment and the like; it must be a work that promotes humanity, calculated for the good of humanity, serving historical, i.e., human, development, in short, a *humane* work. This includes two things: one, that it does good for humanity; the other, that it comes from a "human being." The first alone could be the case with any work, as even the work of nature, for example, of animals, is used by humanity for the advancement of science, etc.; the second requires that the person working knows the human aim of his work; and he can have this consciousness only when he *knows himself as a human being*; so the crucial condition is—*self-consciousness.*

Certainly much is already achieved when you stop being "fragment-workers,"[146] but with this, you only get a view of the whole of your work, and gain a consciousness about it, which is still far removed from a self-consciousness, a consciousness about your true "self" or "essence," the human being. The worker continues to have the desire for a "higher consciousness," which he satisfies in a time of revelry, because work activity is unable to quench it. Therefore, revelry stands by the side of his work, and he feels compelled to proclaim work and idleness human in one breath, indeed, to attribute true elevation to the idler, the reveler. He works only to get away from work; he wants to make labor free, only so that he can be free from labor.

Enough, his work has no satisfying content, because it is only assigned by society, is only a stint, a task, an occupation; and, conversely, his society doesn't satisfy him, because it gives only work.

Work ought to satisfy him as a human being; instead it satisfies society; society ought to treat him as a human being, and it treats

146 The German word here is "*Stückarbeiter*." It would usually translate as "piece-worker," but Stirner is referring here to the division of labor on the factory production line, where a worker really only does a *fragment* of what is necessary to make a product, and so has little awareness of all that is necessary for its production.

him as—a paltry worker, or a working pauper.

Work and society are only of use to him, not as he needs them as a human being, but as an "egoist."

This is the attitude of criticism toward labor. It points to the "mind," leads the battle of the "mind with the masses,"[147] and declares communist work to be mindless mass-labor. Work-shy as they are, the masses love to make work easy for themselves. In literature, which is furnished in mass nowadays, this aversion to work produces the universally known *superficiality,* which spurns "the effort of research."[148]

Therefore, humane liberalism says: you want work; well then, we want it as well, but we want it in the fullest measure. We don't want it to gain leisure, but to find all satisfaction in the work itself. We want work because it is our self-development.

But then work must also be adapted to that! The human being is honored only by human, self-conscious work, only the work that has no "egoistic" intention, but only the human being for its goal, and is the self-revelation of the human being, so that it must say: *laboro, ergo sum*: I work, therefore I'm a human being. The humane liberal wants that work of the *mind* which *works over* all matter, the mind that leaves no thing at rest or in its existing condition, that reassures in nothing, that clears away everything, criticizes anew every result that has been won. This restless mind is the true worker, it polishes off prejudices, blasts barriers and boundedness[149], and raises the human being above all that would want to rule over him, whereas the communist only works for himself, and not even freely, but from necessity; in short, he signifies one condemned to hard labor.

The worker of such a type is not "egoistic," because he doesn't work for individuals, neither for himself not for other individuals, and so not for *private* human beings, but for humanity and its advance; he doesn't ease individual pains, doesn't provide for individual needs, but clears away barriers which press in on humanity, dispels prejudices that rule a whole era, overcomes obstacles that obstruct

147 ▸ Bruno Bauer (anonymously), review of H. F. W. Hinrichs, *Politische Vorlesungen*, 2 volumes (Halle, 1843), in *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, No. 5 (April 1844), p. 24.

148 ▸ *Ibid.*

149 In this passage, Stirner uses a lot of wordplay which I did my best to imitate through alliteration.

the path of all, eliminates errors in which people entangle themselves, discovers truths which are found through him for all and for all time; in short—he lives and works for humanity.

Now, in the first place, the discoverer of a great truth doubtless knows that it could be useful to other human beings, and since a jealous withholding brings him no enjoyment, he informs them of it; but even though he has the consciousness that his message is highly valuable to the others, still he has in no way sought and found his truth for the sake of the others, but for his own sake, because he himself yearned for it, because darkness and delusion left him no peace until he had gained light and enlightenment for himself to the best of his powers.

So he works for his own sake and for the satisfaction of *his* need. That in this he was also useful to others, indeed, to future generations, does not take the *egoistic* character from his work.

In the next place, if he still also only worked for his own sake, why would his act be human, those of the others inhuman, i.e., egoistic? Perhaps because this book, painting, symphony, etc., is the work of his whole being, because he has done his best in it, he has laid himself out completely and is to be completely known in it, while the work of a craftsperson reflects only the craftsperson, i.e., the skill in the craft, not "the human being"? In his poems we have the whole Schiller; in so many hundred stoves, on the other hand, we have before us only the stove-maker, not "the human being."

But does this mean any more than: in the one work you see *me* as completely as possible, in the other only my skill? Am *I* not again what the act expresses? And isn't it more egoistic to present *oneself* to the world in a work, to work out and shape *oneself*, than to remain hidden behind one's work? Of course, you say that you are revealing the human being. But the human being that you reveal is you; you reveal only yourself, but with this distinction from the craftsperson, that he doesn't understand how to compress himself into a single work, but to be recognized as himself, must be visited in his other life relationships, and that your need, through whose satisfaction this work came into being, was a—theoretical need.

But you will reply that you reveal quite another human being, a worthier, higher, greater human being, a human being that is more

human than that other. I will assume that you perform the humanly possible, that you bring to pass what no one else succeeds in. In what then does your greatness consist? Precisely in this, that you are more than other human beings (the "masses"), than *human beings* ordinarily are, more than "ordinary human beings"; precisely in your elevation above human beings. You distinguish yourself before other human beings not by being a human being, but because you are a "unique" human being. You show very well what a human being can achieve; but because you, a human being, achieve it, therefore others, also human beings, are in no way able to achieve it[150]; you have carried it out only as a *unique* human being, and are unique in it.

The human being doesn't determine your greatness, but rather *you* create it, because you are more than the human being, and more powerful than other—human beings.

People believe that one cannot be more than human. Rather, one cannot be less!

People also believe that whatever one achieves is good for the human being. Insofar as I remain at all times a human being, or like Schiller, a Swabian, like Kant, a Prussian, like Gustavus Adolphus,[151] a short-sighted person, through my merits I certainly become an outstanding human being, Swabian, Prussian, or short-sighted person. But it isn't much better with that than with Frederick the Great's cane, which became famous for Frederick's sake.

To "Give God the glory" corresponds the modern "Give the human being the glory." But I intend to keep it for myself.

Criticism, in issuing the demand to human beings to be human, declares the necessary condition for sociability; because only as a human being among human beings is one *companionable*. With this it makes its *social* aim known, the establishment of "human society."

Among social theories, criticism is indisputably the most complete,

150 This is a more literal translation of the German than Byington's "this by no means *shows* that others, also men, are able to do as much." Stirner says nothing about showing anything, and for a specific reason. For Stirner, the utter uniqueness of each individual in each moment makes it absurd to think that any two individuals could actually achieve *the same thing*. They may achieve things that *appear* similar, but never *the same thing*. Byington's translation completely misses this point that is glaringly there in the German.

151 King of Sweden from 1611 to 1632.

because it removes and undermines everything that *separates* human being from human being: all prerogatives down to the prerogative of faith. In it, the love-principle of Christianity, the true social principle, comes to its purest implementation, and the last possible experiment is made to take away exclusivity and repugnance from human beings: a struggle against egoism in its simplest, and therefore hardest form, in the form of uniqueness, exclusivity, itself.

"How can you truly live socially so long as even just one exclusivity still exists between you?"

I ask the opposite: How can you be truly unique so long as one connection still exists between you? If you are connected, then you can't leave each other; if a "tie" encompasses you, then you are only something *with another,* and twelve of you make a dozen, thousands of you a people, millions of you humanity.

"Only when you are human can you treat each other as human beings, just as you can understand each other as patriots only when you are patriotic."

Well then, I reply: only when you are unique can you have intercourse with each other as what you are.

Precisely the sharpest critic gets hit hardest by the curse of his principle. Shaking off one exclusive thing after another, religiosity, patriotism, etc., he dissolves one tie after another, and separates himself from the religious person, the patriot, etc., until at last, after all the ties have burst apart, he stands—alone. He must indeed exclude all of those who have anything exclusive or private, and in the end what can be more exclusive than the exclusive, unique person itself?

Or does he perhaps mean that it would be better if *all* became human beings and gave up exclusivity? Indeed, precisely because "all" means "every individual," the most glaring contradiction remains, because the "individual" is exclusivity itself. If the humane liberal no longer allows anything private, anything exclusive, any private thoughts, any private follies to the individual; if he criticizes everything in front of his face away, because his hatred of the private is an absolute and fanatical hatred; if he knows no tolerance toward the private, because everything private is *inhuman*: he can still not criticize the private person itself away, because the hardness of the

individual person resists his criticism, and he must be satisfied with declaring this person a "private person" and actually let him have everything private again.

What will the society that no longer concerns itself with anything private do? Make the private impossible? No, but "subordinate it to the interests of society, and, for example, leave it to the private will to establish holidays, as many as it wants, so long as it doesn't come into collision with the universal interest."[152] Everything private is *left free,* i.e., it has no interest for society.

> *By raising their barrier against science, the church and religiosity have declared that they are what they always were, but what was hidden under another appearance when they were given out as the basis and necessary foundation of the state—a purely private matter. Even when they were connected to the state and made it Christian, they were only the proof that the state had not yet developed its universal political idea, that it was only establishing private rights—they were only the highest expression of the fact that the state was a private matter and only dealt with private matters. When the state will finally have the courage and the force to fulfill its universal purpose and to be free, thus when it is also able to give special interests and private concerns their true position—then religion and the church will be free as they have never been before. As the most purely private matter, and a satisfaction of purely personal needs, they will be left to themselves; and every individual, every congregation and church community, will be able to care for the salvation of the soul as they want and as they deem necessary. Everyone will care for his soul's salvation and will accept and pay as the soul's caretaker the one who seems to him to best guarantee the satisfaction of his need. Science is finally left completely out of the game.*[153]

But what is supposed to happen? Is social life supposed to come to an end, and all cordiality, all fraternization, everything that is created by the love- or society-principle, to disappear?

152 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage,* (Brunswick, 1843), p. 66.

153 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigen Agelegenheit* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1842) pp. 62-63.

As if one is not always looking for the other, because he *needs* him; as if one must not join together with the other when he *needs* him. But the difference is that then the individual actually *joins forces* with the individual, whereas formerly they were *bound together* by a tie; before he comes of age, the son is attached to the father by a tie, after this, they can come together independently; before this, they *belonged* together as family members (they were the "bondsmen" of the family), after this, they join forces as egoists; sonship and fatherhood remain, but son and father no longer bind each other to them.[154]

The last privilege is, in truth, "the human being"; all are privileged or invested with it. Because, as Bruno Bauer himself says, "privilege remains even when it is extended to all."[155]

So liberalism proceeds in the following changes:

First: the individual *is* not the human being, therefore his individual personality counts for nothing; no personal will, no capriciousness, no orders or decrees!

Second: the individual *has* nothing human, therefore no mine and thine, or property, counts.

Third: since the individual neither is a human being nor has anything human, he is not to be at all, he is, as an egoist with his egoistic things, to get annihilated by criticism, to make room for the human being, "the human being only now discovered."

But although the individual is not the human being, the human being is still present in the individual, and, like every phantasm and everything divine, has its existence in him. Thus, political liberalism awards to the individual everything that is due to him as a "human being by birth," as a born human being, among which are included freedom of conscience, possession, etc.—in short, "human rights"; socialism grants the individual what comes to him as an *active* human being, as a "working" human being; finally, humane liberalism gives the individual what he has as a "human being," i.e., everything that belongs to humanity. Consequently, the unique has nothing at all, humanity everything; and the necessity of "rebirth" preached in

154 I could also have translated this as "but son and father no longer bind themselves to them," but Stirner is talking about two people relating to each other and that *relationship* changing through the releasing of a mutual tie.

155 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, p. 60.

Christianity is demanded without ambiguity and to the fullest degree. Become a new creature, become "human"!

One might even feel himself reminded of the close of the Lord's Prayer. To the human being belongs the *lordship* (the "power" or *dynamis*); therefore no individual is allowed to be lord, but the human being is the lord of individuals;—the human being's is the *kingdom*, i.e., the world, therefore the individual should not be the property owner, but rather the human being, "all," have command over the world as property;—from all, the human being deserves praise, *glorification,* or "glory" (*doxa*), because the human being or humanity is the individual's end, for which he works, thinks, lives, and for whose glorification he must become "human."

Up to now human beings have always striven to discover a community in which their inequalities in other respects would become "non-essential"; they strove for equalization, and consequently for *equality,* and wanted to all come under one hat, which means nothing less than that they were seeking for one lord, one tie, one faith ("we all believe in one God"). There can be nothing more communal or equal for human beings than the human being itself, and in this community the love-impulse had found its satisfaction; it didn't rest until it had brought about this last equalization, leveled all inequality, laid human being on the breast of human being. But under this community decay and ruin become most glaring. In a more limited community, the Frenchman still stood against the German, the Christian against the Moslem, etc. Now, in contrast, *the* human being stands against *human beings,* or, since human beings are not the human being, the human being stands against the inhuman monster.

The sentence "God has become the human being" is now followed by "the human being has become I." This is *the human I.* But we turn this upside down and say: I wasn't able to find myself so long as I sought myself as a human being. But now that it appears that the human being is striving to become I and to gain a bodily existence in me, I note well that everything really depends on me, and the human being is lost without me. But I don't want to give myself up to the shrine of this most holy thing and from now on won't ask whether I am a human being or an inhuman monster in my pursuits; let this *spirit* keep off my neck!

Humane liberalism goes to work radically. If on just one point you want to be or have something special, if you want to keep even one prerogative for yourself above other, to lay claim to even one right that is not a "universal human right," you are an *egoist*.

Alright then! I don't want to have or be anything special above others, I don't want to claim any prerogatives against them, but—I also don't measure myself by others, and don't want to have any *right* whatsoever. I want to be and have everything that I can be and have. If others are and have *something similar,* what do I care? Something equal, the same, they can neither be nor have. I do them no *harm,* as I also do the rock no harm by "having the advantage" of motion over it. If they *could* have it, they would have it.

To do other people no *harm*, this is what the demand to possess no prerogative boils down to; to renounce all "having the advantage," the strictest theory of *renunciation*. One is not supposed to think of himself as anything special, for example, a Jew or a Christian. Now I don't think of myself as anything special, but as *unique*. Without a doubt, I am *similar* to others; however, this holds good only for comparison or reflection; in fact, I am incomparable, unique. My flesh is not their flesh, my mind is not their mind. If you bring them under the generalities "flesh, mind," those are your *thoughts*, which have nothing to do with *my* flesh, *my* mind, and can least of all put out a "call" to what is mine.

I don't intend to recognize or respect anything in you, neither the property owner nor the pauper, nor even just the human being, but rather to *use you*. I find that salt makes food delicious to me, so I dissolve it; I recognize fish as food, so I eat it; I discover in you the gift of making my life brighter, so I choose you for a companion. Or I study crystallization in salt, animality in fish, human beings in you, etc. But to me you are only what you are for me, namely my object; and because *my* object, therefore my property.

In humane liberalism pauperism is completed. We first have to come down to the most pauperish, poverty-stricken condition if we want to attain *ownness*, because we have to strip away everything alien. But nothing seems more pauperish than the naked—human being.

It is more than pauperism, however, when I cast off the human

being as well, because I feel that it too is alien to me and that I can make no pretensions on it. This is no longer mere pauperism: because even the last rag has fallen off, here stands actual nakedness, the laying bare of everything alien. The pauper has stripped away pauperism itself, and with this has ceased to be what he was, a pauper.

I am no longer a pauper, but I have been one.

So until this time the discord could not erupt, because actually there is only a squabble between modern liberals and outdated liberals, a squabble between those who understand "freedom" on a small scale and those who want the "full measure" of freedom, and so between the *moderates* and the *extremists*. Everything revolves around the question: *how free* must *the human being* be? That the human being must be free, everyone believes in this; therefore all are also liberal. But the inhuman monster that hides inside every individual, how does one repress it? How does one manage not to let the inhuman monster go free at the same time as the human being?

Liberalism as a whole has a mortal enemy, an unconquerable opposition, as God has the devil: by the human being's side there always stands the inhuman monster, the individual, the egoist. The state, society, humanity, do not overcome this devil.

Humane liberalism has undertaken the task of showing the other liberals that they still don't want "freedom."

If the other liberals had only isolated egoism in sight and were for the most part blind, radical liberalism has egoism "in mass" against it, throws all who do not make the cause of freedom their own like it does among the masses, so that now human being and inhuman monster, rigidly separated, stand against each other as enemies, namely the "masses" and "criticism"[156]; more specifically, "free, human criticism," as it is called[157], as opposed to crude, for example, religious criticism.

Criticism expresses the hope that it will be victorious over all the masses and "prove their own universal shortcomings to them."[158] So

156 ▸ Bruno Bauer (anonymously), review of H. F. W. Hinrichs, *Politische Vorlesungen*, 2 volumes (Halle, 1843), in *Allgemeine Literturzeitung*, No. 5 (April 1844), pp. 23-5.

157 ▸ Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, p. 114.

158 ▸ Konrad Melchior Hirzel, "Korrespondenz aus Zürich", *Ausgemeine Literaturzeitung*, no.5 (April 1844), p.15.

it wants to finally be in the right,[159] and to represent all squabbles of the "faint-hearted and timid" as an egoistic *dogmatism,*[160] as pettiness, paltriness. All strife loses meaning, and petty disputes are abandoned, because in criticism a common enemy comes onto the field. "You are all egoists, one no better than the other!" Now the egoists stand together against criticism.

Actually the egoists? No, they are fighting against criticism precisely because it accuses them of egoism; they do not confess to egoism. Therefore criticism and the masses stand on the same basis: both fight against egoism, both reject it for themselves and shift the blame for it to the other.

Criticism and the masses pursue the same goal, freedom from egoism, and only quarrel over who most nearly approaches the goal or even achieves it.

The Jews, the Christians, the absolutists, the men of darkness[161] and men of light, politicians, communists, in short, all keep the accusation of egoism away from themselves; and since now criticism makes this accusation against them bluntly and in the broadest sense, they all *justify* themselves against the accusation of egoism, and fight—egoism, the same enemy against which criticism makes war.

Both, criticism and masses, are enemies of egoists, and both seek to free themselves from egoism, as much by purifying or cleansing *themselves* as by attributing it to the opposing party.

The critic is the true "spokesperson of the masses" who gives them the "simple concept and phrase" of egoism, whereas the spokespeople to who the triumph is denied were only bunglers.[162] He is their prince and general in their war of liberation against egoism; what he fights against, they also fight against. But at the same time he is also their enemy, only not the enemy before them, but the friendly enemy who wields the whip behind the timid to force courage into them.

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159 "*Recht.*"

160 "*Rechthaberei.*"

161 "*Dunkelmann*" ("man of darkness") is a term used to accuse someone of obscurantism. Its opposite, "*Lichtmann*" ("man of light") would refer to an enlightened person in the modern western sense of the term.

162 ▸ Bruno Bauer (anonymously), review of H. F. W. Hinrichs, *Politische Vorlesungen*, 2 volumes (Halle, 1843), in *Allgemeine Literturzeitung*, No. 5 (April 1844), p. 24.

This reduces the opposition of criticism and masses to the following contradiction: "You are egoists!" "No, we're not!" "I'll prove it to you!" "You'll hear our justification!"

Let's take them both for what they claim to be, non-egoists, and for what they take each other for, egoists. They are and are not egoists.

Criticism actually says: You must free your *I* so completely from all limitations that it becomes a *human I*. I say: Free yourself as far as you can, and you have done your part; because it is not given to everyone to break through all limits, or, more eloquently: that is not a limit for everyone which is one to the others. Consequently, don't exhaust yourself on the limits of others; it's enough if you tear down your own. Who has ever been able to break down even one limit *for all people?* Aren't countless people today, as at all times, running around with all the "limitations of humanity"? One who overturns one of *his* limits may have shown others the way and the means; the overturning of *their* limits remains their affair. No one does anything else either. Asking people to become fully human is to call on them to cast down all human limits. That is impossible, because *the* human being has no limits. I certainly have some, but only *mine* are of any concern to me, and only they can be overcome by me. I cannot become a *human I*, because I am simply I, and not a mere human being.

But let's still see whether criticism hasn't taught us something that we can take to heart! Am I not free if I am not without interests, not human if I am not disinterested? Now, even if I'm not much enthused to be free or human, I still don't want to miss any opportunity to put *myself* forward or assert myself. Criticism offers me this opportunity by teaching that, if something takes root in me and becomes indissoluble, I become its prisoner and slave, i.e., a possessed person. An interest, whatever it may be for, has captured a slave in me if I cannot get rid of it, and is no longer my property, but I am its. Let's therefore accept the lesson of criticism to let no part of our property become stable, and to feel happy only in—*dissolving* it.

So if criticism says: You are only human when you are restlessly criticizing and dissolving! Then we say: I am human in any case, and I am I as well; therefore I only want to take care to secure my property to myself, and to secure it, I continually take it back into myself, destroy

in it every movement toward independence, and consume it before it can fix itself and become a "fixed idea" or an "obsession."

But I don't do it for the sake of my "human calling," but because I call myself to it. I don't strut about dissolving everything that it's possible for a human being to dissolve, and, for example, while not yet ten years old, I don't criticize the nonsense of the commandments, but I am nevertheless a human being, and act humanly precisely in this, that I still leave them uncriticized. In short, I have no calling, and follow none, not even the calling to be human.

Do I now reject what liberalism has gained in its various efforts? May it never be that anything gained should be lost! Only, after "the human being" has become free through liberalism, I turn my look back at myself and and tell myself frankly: What the human being seems to have gained, only *I* have gained.

The human being is free when "the human being is to the human being the supreme being." So it is part of the completion of liberalism that every supreme being gets destroyed, theology overturned by anthropology, God and his grace laughed at, "atheism" made universal.

The egoism of property has lost its last thing when even the "my God" has become meaningless; because God only exists when he has the individual's salvation at heart, as the latter seeks his salvation in him.

Political liberalism abolished the inequality of masters and servants. It made people *masterless*, anarchic. The master was now moved far away from the individual, the "egoist," to become a ghost: the law or the state. Social liberalism abolishes the inequality of possession, of the rich and the poor, and makes people *possessionless* or propertyless. Property is taken away from the individual and handed over to ghostly society. Humane liberalism makes people *godless,* atheistic. Therefore, the individual's God, "my God," must be abolished. Now masterlessness is in fact at the same time freedom from service, possessionlessness is at the same freedom from worry, godlessness is at the same time freedom from prejudice: because with the master, the servant falls away; with possession, the worry about it; with the firmly rooted God, prejudice. But because the master rises again as state, the servant reappears as subject; since possession becomes the property of society, so worry is regenerated as work; and since God

as the human being becomes a prejudice, a new faith arises, faith in humanity or liberty. In place of the individual's God, now the God of all, namely, "the human being," has been raised up; "it is indeed the highest thing in all of us to be human." But since no one can quite be what the idea "human being" implies, the human being remains for the individual a lofty beyond, an unattained supreme being, a God. But at the same time, this is the "true God," because it is fully adequate for us—in other words is our own "*self*": we ourselves, but separated from us and raised over us.

1.3.4. Postscript[163]

The foregoing appraisal of "free human criticism," along with what appears elsewhere with regard to writings of this tendency, was written in bits and pieces immediately after the appearance of the relevant books, and I did little more than bring the fragments together. But criticism is restlessly pressing forward, and in this way makes it necessary for me to return to it once more, now that my book is finished, and insert this concluding comment.

I have before me the latest, the eighth, issue of Bruno Bauer's *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*.

There again "the universal interests of society" stand at the top. But criticism has reflected, and given this "society" a definition by which it is dissociated from a form which had previously still been confused with it: the "state," still celebrated in earlier passages as the "free state," is abandoned completely because it can in no way fulfill the task of "human society." Criticism, in only 1842, "felt itself constrained for a moment to identify the human and the political essence"; but now it has found that the state, even as a "free state," is not human society, or, as it could also say, that the people is not "the human being." We saw how it finished with theology and clearly showed how God caves in before the human being; we see them now coming to terms with politics in the same way, and showing that before the human being peoples and nationalities fall; so we see how it explains church and state, by declaring them both inhuman, and we will see—since it already gives this away to us—that it can also bring proof that before the human being the "masses," which it even calls a "spiritual essence," appear worthless. How are the lesser "spiritual essences" supposed to be able to hold up before the supreme spirit? "The human being" casts down false idols.

So for now what the critic is aiming at is the examination of the "masses," which he will place before "the human being" to combat them from this standpoint. "What is now the object of criticism?"

163 Stirner had finished a first draft of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* and then read the eighth issue of *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, which included some new self-critical articles from the "pure critics." Stirner added this postscript as a response to the new material.

"The masses, a spiritual essence!" The critic will "get to know" them and find that they stand in contradiction to the human being; he will demonstrate that they are inhuman, and will succeed as well in this proof as in the earlier ones, that the divine and the national, or ecclesiastical and state matters, were inhuman.

The masses get defined as "the most significant product of the revolution, as the deluded mob which the illusions of political enlightenment, and of the whole Enlightenment of the eighteenth century in general, have given over to a boundless resentment." The revolution satisfied some with its results and left others unsatisfied; the satisfied portion is the middle class (bourgeoisie, philistines, etc.), the unsatisfied portion is the—masses. Doesn't the critic, so placed, himself belong to the masses?

But the unsatisfied are still in great uncertainty, and their dissatisfaction expresses itself only in a "boundless resentment." The equally unsatisfied critic now wants to become master of this: he can neither want nor attain more than to bring that "spiritual being," the masses, out of its resentment, and "uplift" those who were just resentful, i.e., give them the right attitude toward those results of the revolution that are to be overcome; he can become the head of the masses, their determined spokesperson. Therefore, he also wants to "do away with the deep chasm which separates him from the mob." He is distinguished from those who want to "uplift the lower classes of the people" by wanting to save not only these from "resentment," but also himself.

But, of course, his consciousness also doesn't deceive him, when he thinks of the masses as the "natural opponents of theory," and foresees that "the more this theory develops itself, the more it will consolidate the masses." Because the critic can neither enlighten nor satisfy the masses with his *requirement,* the human being. If over against the bourgeoisie they are only the "lower classes of the people," a politically insignificant mass, then over against "the human being" they must be even more a mere mass, a humanly insignificant, indeed an inhuman, mass, or a mob of inhuman monsters.

The critic does away with everything human, and starting from the premise that the human is the true, he works against himself, by

denying it wherever it has been found. He proves only that the human is to be found nowhere except in his head, but the inhuman is to be found everywhere. The inhuman is the actual, what exists on all sides, and through his proof that it is "inhuman" the critic only clearly expresses the tautological proposition that it is inhuman.

But what if the inhuman, in turning its back on itself with resolute courage, also turned away from the worrisome critic and left him standing, untouched and unaffected by his objections? "You call me the inhuman," it might say to him, "and I really am so—for you; but I am so only because you bring me into opposition with the human, and I could only despise myself so long as I let myself be bewitched by this opposition; I was despicable because I sought my 'better self' outside myself; I was the inhuman because I dreamed of the 'human'; I was like the pious who hunger after their 'true *I*' and always remain 'poor sinners'; I thought of myself only in comparison to another; enough, I was not all in all, was not—*unique*. But now I cease to appear to myself as inhuman, cease to measure myself and let myself be measured by the human, cease to recognized anything over me; and therefore—God bless,[164] humane critic! I have only been the inhuman, am now I am no longer this, but am the unique, indeed, to your disgust, the egoistic, but the egoistic not as it lets itself be measured by the human, humane and unselfish, but the egoistic as the—unique."

We have to pay attention to yet another sentence in the same issue. "Criticism sets up no dogmas, and wants to get to know nothing but *things*."

The critic is afraid of becoming "dogmatic" or setting up dogmas. Of course, he would thereby indeed become the opposite of the critic, the dogmatist; since he is good as a critic, he would now become bad, or change from an unselfish person to an egoist, etc. "Whatever you do, no dogma!" This is his—dogma. Because the critic remains on

164 "*Gott befohlen,*" being used as a way of saying goodbye to the "humane critics," but also as Stirner's biting sarcasm pointing out the continued piety of pure criticism which had set "the human" as a power over actual flesh and blood human beings, an ideal to live up to. This is particularly biting sarcasm, because the pure, or "humane," critics were so adamant in their self-proclaimed atheism. Byington's choice to translate this with the mild "farewell" completely removes this subtle bit of mockery.

one and the same terrain with the dogmatist, that of *thoughts*. Like the latter, he always starts from a thought, but he differs in this, that he never ceases to keep the fundamental thought embroiled in the *process of thinking,* so as not to let it become stable. He only asserts the process of thinking against the orthodoxy of thought, progress in thinking against stagnation of it. No thought is safe before criticism, since it is thinking or the thinking mind itself.

Therefore I repeat that the religious world—and this is simply the world of thought—attains its fulfillment in criticism, where thinking encroaches on every thought, none of which is allowed to "egoistically" establish itself. Where would the "purity of criticism," the purity of thought, be left, if even just one thought escaped the process of thinking? This explains why here and there even the critic already gently mocks the thought of the human being, of humanity, of humaneness, because he suspects that here a thought is approaching dogmatic fixedness. But he cannot eliminate this thought until he has found a—"higher" one in which it dissolves; because he moves only—in thoughts. This higher thought could be expressed as that of the movement or process of thinking itself, i.e., as the thought of thinking or of criticism.

Freedom of thinking is in fact completed in this, spiritual freedom celebrates its triumph: because the individual, "egoistic" thoughts have lost their dogmatic violence. There is nothing left but the—dogma of free thinking or of criticism.

Against everything that belongs to the world of thought, criticism is in the right, i.e., in power; it is the victor. Criticism, and criticism alone, "stays up to date." From the standpoint of thought there is no power that would be able to be superior to its power, and it is a pleasure to see how easily and playfully this dragon devours all other worms of thought. To be sure, each worm writhes, but criticism crushes it in all its "twists."

I am no opponent of criticism, i.e., I am no dogmatist, and I don't feel struck by the critic's tooth with which he tears the dogmatist to pieces. If I were a "dogmatist," then I'd place a dogma, i.e., a thought, an idea, a principle on top, and complete it as a "systematist," by spinning it out into a system; in other words, into a thought structure.

Contrarily, if I were a critic, an opponent of the dogmatist, then I'd lead the battle of free thinking against enslaving thoughts, defend thinking against what was thought. But I am neither the champion of a thought nor of thinking; because "I," from which I start, am not a thought, not do I consist in thinking. Against me, the unnameable, the realm of thoughts, thinking, and spirit shatters.

Criticism is the fight of the possessed one against possession as such, against all possession; a fight that is founded in the consciousness that possession—or, as the critic calls it, a religious and theological attitude—exists everywhere. He knows that people behave religiously or devoutly not only toward God, but also toward other ideas, like right, state, law, etc.; in other words, he recognizes possession everywhere. So he wants to break up thoughts by thinking—but I say, only thoughtlessness really saves me from thoughts. It isn't thinking, but my thoughtlessness, or *I*, the unthinkable, inconceivable, that frees me from possession.

A jerk does me the service of the most careful thought, a stretching of the limbs shakes off the torment of thoughts, an upward leap hurls the nightmare of the religious world from my breast, a hurrah shouted out with joy throws off years of burdens. But the enormous significance of unthinking jubilation couldn't be recognized in the long night of thinking and believing.

"What crudeness and frivolity, to want to solve the most difficult problems, to deal with the most comprehensive task, by a *breaking off!*"

But do you have tasks if you don't set them for yourself? As long as you set them, you will not let them go, and I certainly have nothing against you thinking, and in thinking, creating a thousand thoughts. But you who have set yourself the tasks, are you not supposed to be able to throw them over again? Do you have to be bound to these tasks, and do they have to become absolute tasks?

To mention only one thing, the government has been belittled because it has taken up violent means against thoughts, has intervened against the press with the police power of censorship, and has made a personal fight out of a literary one. As if it were solely a matter of thoughts, and as if one had to have an unselfish, self-denying, and

self-sacrificing attitude toward thoughts! Do those thoughts not attack the ones governing themselves, and so provoke egoism? And don't the thinkers set before those attacked the *religious* demand to revere the power of thought, of ideas? They are supposed to voluntarily succumb in surrender, because the divine power of thought, Minerva, fights on their enemies' side. That would indeed be an act of possession, a religious sacrifice. To be sure, those who govern are themselves stuck in religious prejudice, and follow the leading power of an idea or a belief; but they are also unadmitted egoists, and right here, against the enemy, their suppressed egoism breaks loose: possessed in their belief, they are at the same time unpossessed by their opponents' belief, i.e., they are egoists against it. If one wants to make an accusation, it could only be the reverse, namely that they are possessed by their ideas.

Against thoughts there is to be no egoistic violence, no police violence, and the like. So the believers in thinking believe. But thinking and its thoughts are not sacred to *me*, and I also defend *my skin* against them. That may be an unreasonable defense; but if I am obligated to reason, then I, like Abraham, must sacrifice my dearest to it!

In the kingdom of thought, which, like that of belief, is the kingdom of heaven, everyone is certainly wrong if he uses *unthinking* force, just as everyone is wrong if in the kingdom of love he acts unlovingly, or, although he is a Christian, and so lives in the kingdom of love, still acts in an unchristian way; in these kingdoms, to which he feels he belongs and nonetheless evades their laws, he is a "sinner" or "egoist." But he can only escape the rule of these kingdoms when he becomes a *criminal* against them.

Here the result is also this, that the struggle of the thinkers against the government is indeed in the right, namely in power, to the extent that it is waged against the government's thoughts (the government falls silent and has no idea how to make a significant literary objection), on the other hand, it finds itself in the wrong, namely, in powerlessness, to the extent that it knows how to bring nothing but thoughts into the field against a personal power (the egoistic power plugs the thinkers' mouths). The theoretical fight can't complete the victory, and the sacred power of thought is defeated by the force of

egoism. Only the egoistic fight, the fight of egoists on both sides, makes everything clear.

This last now, making thinking a matter of egoistic taste, a matter of the unique, a mere pastime or hobby as it were, and taking from it the significance of "being the last decisive power," this debasement and desecration of thinking, this equalization of the unthinking and thoughtful *I*, this crude but actual "equality"—criticism is not able to produce, because it is itself only the priest of thinking, and sees nothing beyond thinking but—the deluge.

Criticism indeed claims, for example, that free criticism may triumph over the state, but at the same time it defends itself against the accusation, which is made against it by the state government, that it is "caprice and impudence"; so it thinks that "caprice and impudence" may not triumph, only it may. It is rather the reverse: the state can actually be defeated only by impudent caprice.

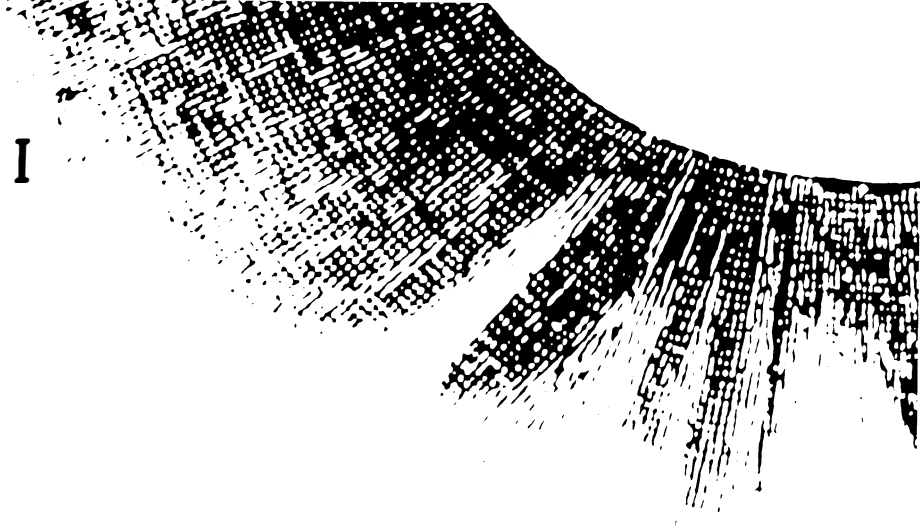
To close with this, it may now be clear that the critic, in his new turn of phrase,[165] has not transformed himself, but has "only made good a mistake," "sorted out a subject," and says too much when he talks about "criticism criticizing itself"; it, or rather he, has only criticized its "mistakes" and cleansed it of its "inconsistencies." If he wanted to criticize criticism, he would have to look and see whether there was anything in its assumptions.

I, for my part, start from an assumption in assuming *myself;* but my assumption does not struggle for its perfection, like the "human being struggling for its perfection," but only serves me to enjoy and consume it. I consume nothing but my assumption, and exist only by consuming it. But for this reason that assumption is no assumption at all; because since I am the unique, I know nothing of the duality of an assuming and an assumed *I* (an "incomplete" and a "complete" *I* or human being); but that I consume myself means only that I am. I do not assume myself, because in each moment I am really setting up or creating myself for the first time, and am only I, not by being assumed, but by being set up, and again set up only in the moment

165 I have chosen to put together two possible translations for the word "*Wendung*" here, "turn" and "phrase," because I think this most clearly reflects Stirner's meaning. He often seems to use words which have more than one meaning with the intention of implying more than one of those meanings.

when I set myself up; i.e., I am creator and creature in one.

If the previous assumptions are to melt away in a complete dissolution, they cannot again be dissolved into a higher assumption, i.e., a thought, or thinking itself, criticism. That dissolution should benefit *me*; otherwise they only belong to the series of innumerable dissolutions which declared old truths to be falsehoods and did away with long-nurtured assumptions in favor of others, such as precisely the human being, God, the state, pure morality, etc.



2. I

At the entrance of the modern era stands the "God-man."[166] Will only the God in the God-man evaporate at its exit, and can the God-man really die if only the God in him dies? They didn't think of this question, and considered themselves finished, when in our day they brought the work of the Enlightenment, the overcoming of God, to a victorious end. They didn't notice that the human being has killed God in order to now become—"sole God on high." The **other world outside us** is indeed swept away, and the great enterprise of the men of the Enlightenment is accomplished; but the **other world inside us** has become a new heaven and calls us forth to storm the heavens once again: God has had to make way, but not for us, rather for—humanity. How can you believe the God-man has died before the man in him, as well as the God, has died?

166 Though I am generally translating "*mensch*" as "human being," in this specific case, the reference to the "God-man" of Christian theology calls for this translation.

2.1 Ownness[167]

"Doesn't the mind thirst for freedom?"—Oh, not just my mind, but my body also thirsts for it, hour after hour! When I stand before the fragrant castle kitchen and my nose tells my palate of the tasty dishes being prepared there, my palate, stuck with only dry bread, feels a terrible yearning; when my eyes tell my calloused back about the soft down upon which it might lie more delightfully than on its crushed straw, a grim fury seizes it; when—but let's not follow the pains any further. —And you call that a longing for freedom? Then what do you want to get free from? From your hardtack and straw bed? Then throw them away! —But that doesn't seem to serve your purpose: instead you want to have the freedom to enjoy delicious food and downy beds. Are people supposed to give you this "freedom"—are they supposed to permit it to you? You don't hope for that from their charity, because you know that they all think like you: each is nearest to himself! So how do you plan to achieve the enjoyment of such food and beds? Most likely no other way than by making them your property!

If you reflect on it correctly, you don't want the freedom to have all these fine things, for with this freedom you do not have them; you actually want to have these things, to call them *yours* and possess them as *your property*. What use is a freedom to you, if it contributes nothing? And if you became free from everything, you would no longer have anything; because freedom is lacking in content. For one

167 *Eigenheit* can also be translated as property, peculiarity or individuality, in the sense of something that distinguishes a particular individual. In one of the Italian translations of the book, the word is translated as *l'originalità*, i.e., originality.

who doesn't know how to use it, this useless permission has no value; but how I make use of it depends on my ownness.

I have no objection to freedom, but I want more than freedom for you: you should not just *be rid* of what you don't want, you should also have what you want; you should not just be a "freeman," you should also be an "owner."

Free—from what? Oh, what is there that cannot be shaken off? The yoke of bondage, of feudal sovereignty, of aristocracy and prince, the rule of the desires and passions; yes, even the rule of one's own will, of self-will, for the most thorough self-denial is nothing but freedom—freedom, namely, from self-determination, from one's own self; and the urge for freedom as something absolute, worth any price, destroyed our ownness: it created self-denial. But the freer I become, the more constraint piles up before my eyes; the more powerless I feel. The unfree son of the wilderness feels nothing yet of all the limits that press on the educated human being; he seems freer to himself than the latter. To the extent that I gain freedom for myself, I create new limits and tasks for myself; if I've invented railroads, I feel weak again because I still can't sail through the air like a bird; and if I have solved a problem whose obscurity disturbed my mind, I then expect to quickly solve countless others whose mysteriousness hinders my progress, dims my free view, and makes the limits of my freedom too painfully obvious to me. "Now that you have become free from sins, you have become *servants* of righteousness."[168] Don't republicans, in their broad freedom, become servants of the law? How true Christian hearts longed at all times to become free, how they pined to see themselves released from the bonds of earthly life! They looked out toward the land of freedom. ("The Jerusalem that is above is the freewoman; she is the mother of us all."[169])

Being free from something means only being unattached to or rid of it. "He is free from a headache" is the same as "he is rid of it." "He is free of this prejudice" is the same as "he has never held it" or "he has

168 ▸ Romans 6:18.
169 ▸ Galatians 4:26.

rid himself of it." In "less"[170] we complete the freedom Christianity recommends, in sinless, godless, morality-less, etc.

Freedom is the doctrine of Christianity. "Ye, dear brethren, are called to freedom."[171] "So speak and so do, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom."[172]

So must we give up freedom because it betrays itself as a Christian ideal? No, nothing is to be lost, not freedom either; but it has to become our own, and it can't do this in the form of freedom.

What a difference between freedom and ownness! One can get *rid* of a lot, but one doesn't get rid of everything; one becomes free from much, but not from all. One may be free inwardly despite a condition of slavery, though, once again, it is only from a whole lot of things, not from everything; but as a slave one does not get *free* from the whip, the imperious temper, etc., of the master. "Freedom lives only in the realm of dreams!" On the other hand, ownness is my whole essence and existence, it is myself. I am free from what I am *rid* of, owner of what I have in my *power*, what I *control*. I am at all times and under every circumstance *my own*, if I know how to have myself and do not waste myself on others. Being free is something that I cannot truly *will*, because I cannot make it, I cannot create it: I can only wish for it and—strive for it, because it remains an ideal, a phantasm. The fetters of reality cut the sharpest welts in my flesh at every moment. But I remain *my own*. Given over in bondage to a master, I think only of myself and my advantage; his blows indeed strike me, I am not *free* from them; but I endure them only for *my benefit*, perhaps to deceive him and make him feel safe with my sham of patience or, again, to avoid rousing anger against myself through my insubordination. But because I keep an eye out for myself and my self-interest, I grab the first good opportunity by the forelock to crush the slave-owner. That I then become *free* from him and his whip is only the result of my earlier egoism. Here someone might say that I was "free" even in the condition of slavery—that is, "in myself" or "inwardly." But "free in oneself" is not "actually free," and "inwardly" is not "outwardly." On the other

170 "*los*" in the German, the word translated as "rid" in the previous sentences.

171 ▸ I Peter 2:16.

172 ▸ James 2:12.

hand, I was own, *my own*, completely, inwardly and outwardly. Under the rule of a cruel master my body is not "free" from torments and lashes; but it is *my* bones that groan under the torture, *my* fibers that twitch under the blows, and *I* groan because *my* body groans. That *I* sigh and shiver proves that I have not yet lost *myself*, that I am still my own. My leg is not "free" from the master's stick, but it is *my* leg and is inseparable. Let him tear it off me and see if he still has my leg! He holds nothing in his hand but—the corpse of my leg, which is as little my leg as a dead dog is still a dog. A dog has a beating heart, a so-called dead dog has none and so is no longer a dog.

If one claims that a slave may still be inwardly free, he in fact says only the most indisputable and trivial thing. For who is likely to claim that anyone is *wholly* without freedom? If I am an eye-servant, can I therefore not be free from countless things, from faith in Zeus, for example, or the desire for fame, and so on? So why shouldn't a whipped slave also be able to be inwardly free from an unchristian attitude, from hatred for his enemies, etc.? He then has "Christian freedom," is rid of the unchristian; but is he absolutely free, free from everything, for example, from the Christian delusion, or from bodily pain, etc.?

Meanwhile, this all seems to be said more against the name than against the thing. But is the name unimportant, and hasn't a word, a shibboleth, always inspired and—beguiled people? But between freedom and ownness, there is still a deeper gap than the mere difference between the words.

The whole world wants freedom, everyone longs for its reign to come. Oh, enchantingly beautiful dream of a flowering "reign of freedom," a "free human race"!—who has not dreamed of it? So human beings should become free, entirely free, free from all constraint! From all constraint—really, from all? Should they never put any constraints on themselves anymore? "Oh, yes, that, of course; don't you see that isn't constraint at all?" Well then, at any rate, they should get free from religious belief, from the strict duties of morality, from the inexorability of the law, from... —"What a dreadful misunderstanding!" Well then, what are they supposed to get free from, and what not?

The charming dream melts away; awakened, one rubs one's half-open eyes and stares at the prosaic questioner. "What should people be free from?" —From blind belief, one cries. What's that? another exclaims, all faith is blind belief; they must become free from all faith. No, no, for God's sake—the first goes off again—don't throw all faith away from you, otherwise the power of brutality breaks in. We must have the republic—a third can be heard—and get free—from all commanding lords. That's no help at all, says a fourth: we just get a new lord then, a "ruling majority"; rather let us free ourselves from this dreadful inequality. —Oh, unhappy equality, again I hear your uncouth roar! How I had dreamed just now so beautifully of a paradise of *freedom*, and what—impudence and lack of restraint now raise their wild hue and cry! So the first laments, and pulls himself together to take up the sword against "excessive freedom." Quickly we hear nothing but the clashing swords of the disagreeing dreamers of freedom.

In every instance, the urge for freedom has come to the desire for a *specific* freedom: for example, freedom of religion, i.e., the religious person wants to become free and independent; from what? Perhaps from faith? No! But from religious inquisitors! So now "political or bourgeois" freedom. The bourgeois wants to become free, not from the bourgeoisie, but from the rule of functionaries, the arbitrariness of princes, etc. Prince Metternich[173] once said that he had "found a way that was suitable for leading people on the path of *genuine* freedom for all the future." The Comte de Provence[174] ran away from France at the very moment that it began to prepare the "reign of freedom," and said: "My captivity had become intolerable for me: I had but one passion, the desire for *freedom*; I thought only of this."

The urge for a *specific* freedom always entails the aim of a new *rule*, as then the revolution "could give its defenders the uplifting feeling that they were fighting for freedom," but truthfully only because they were after a specific freedom, and thus a new *rule*, the rule of law.

173 A reactionary prince who fought against the all of the various left-wing and radical movements of his time (1773-1859).

174 The brother of King Louis XVI, who escaped execution when he fled France, conspired against the French revolution, and when the reaction succeeded in 1814, took power as King Louis XVIII.

You all want freedom, you want *freedom*. So why do you haggle over more or less? *Freedom* can only be the whole of freedom; a piece of freedom is not *freedom*. Do you despair of the possibility of getting the whole of freedom, freedom from all, indeed do you take it for madness to even wish for it? —Well then, give up chasing after phantoms, and spend your efforts on something better than—the *unattainable*.

"Yes, but there is nothing better than freedom!"

So what do you have when you have freedom, namely—since here I will not speak of your piecemeal bits of freedom—complete freedom? Then you are rid of everything, everything that has encumbered you, and there would probably be nothing that does not encumber you once in your life and make you uncomfortable. And for whose sake do you want to get rid of it? Clearly, for *your own sake*, because it is in *your* way! But if something wasn't the least bit uncomfortable to you, but on the contrary quite as you like it, for example, the gentle, but *irresistibly commanding* gaze of your lovers—then you would not want to be rid of and free from it. Why not? Again *for your own sake*! So you take *yourselves* as the measure and judge over all things. You gladly let freedom go when unfreedom, the sweet labor of love, suits *you*; and you take up your freedom again when it begins to suit you better, assuming, that is, which is not the point here, that you have no fear of such a repeal of the union for other (perhaps religious) reasons.

Why don't you want to take courage now to actually make *yourselves* completely and utterly the central point and the main thing? Why snatch at freedom, your dream? Are you your dream? Don't first inquire after your dreams, your visions,[175] your thoughts, because this is all "hollow theory." Ask yourselves and ask after yourselves—this is practical and you know you would very much like to be "practical." But there one listens for what his God (of course, whatever he imagines with the name God is his God) is likely to say about it, and another for what his moral feeling, his conscience, his sense of duty may decide about it, and a third calculates what the people would think of it—and when each has thus asked his Lord God (the people are as good a Lord God as, and indeed more solid than, the otherworldly

175 *Vorstellung.*

and imaginary one: *vox populi, vox dei*[176]), he then adapts himself to his Lord's will and does not listen at all to what *he himself* would like to say and decide.

Therefore turn to yourselves rather than to your gods and idols. Bring out of yourselves what is in you, bring it to light, bring yourselves out as manifestation[177].

How a person acts only from himself, and asks after nothing else, Christians have depicted in "God." He acts as it pleases him. And the foolish human being, who could do exactly the same thing, is instead supposed to act as it pleases God. —If one says, God also proceeds according to eternal laws, that is fitting for me too, since I also can't leave my skin, but have my law in my whole nature, i.e., in myself.

But one only needs to remind you of yourselves to immediately bring you to despair. "What am I?" each of you then asks himself. An abyss of lawless and unregulated impulses, desires, wishes, passions; a chaos without light or a guiding star! How am I supposed to get a correct answer if—without regard for God's commandments or the duties that morality prescribes, without regard for the voice of reason, which in the course of history, after bitter experiences, has raised the best and most reasonable things into law—I simply ask myself? My passion would advise me to do the most senseless thing. —So each one considers himself to be—the *devil*; because if, from a lack of concern for religion, etc., he only considered himself an animal, he would easily find that the animal, which only follows its impulses (its advice, so to speak), doesn't advise or impel itself to do the "most senseless" things, but rather takes very appropriate steps. But the habit of religious thinking has biased our minds so grievously that in our nakedness and naturalness, we—terrify *ourselves*; it has degraded us so that we consider ourselves depraved, born devils. Of course, it comes to you at once that your calling requires you to do the "good," the moral, the right. Now, if you ask *yourselves* what to do, how can the right voice sound forth from you, the voice that points out the

176 "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

177 *Offenbarung* is more often translated as "revelation." I wasn't sure whether to keep this and assume that Stirner intended it as subtle sarcasm against religion, or to use the less religious translation. I chose the latter, but with reservations.

path of the good, the right, the true, etc.? How do God and Belial[178] harmonize?

But what would you think if someone told you: "that one is supposed to listen to God, conscience, duties, laws, etc., is nonsense with which people have stuffed you, head and heart, and made you crazy"? And if he asked you how it is that you know so surely that the voice of nature is a seducer? And if he even demanded that you turn the thing around and actually consider the voice of God and conscience to be the devil's work? There are such graceless people; how will you deal with them? You cannot appeal to your clergymen, parents, and good people, because these are precisely the ones they designate as your *seducers*, as the true seducers and corrupters of youth, who diligently sow the tares of self-loathing and reverence for God, clogging young hearts and making young heads stupid.

But now those people go on and ask: For whose sake do you trouble yourself over God's and other commandments? Surely you don't think this is done merely as a favor to God? No, again you do it—*for your own sake.* —So here again *you* are the main thing, and everyone must tell himself: *I* am my everything and I do everything and I do everything *for my own sake.* If one day it became clear to you that God, the commandments, etc., only harm you, that they reduce and ruin you, indeed, you would cast them off from you just as the Christians condemned Apollo or Minerva or heathen morality. Admittedly, they put Christ and then Mary, as well as Christian morality, in their place; but they did this also for *their* soul's welfare, thus from egoism or ownness.

And it was through this egoism, this ownness, that they got *rid* of the old world of gods and became *free* from it. Ownness *created* a new freedom; because ownness is the creator of everything, as brilliance (a particular ownness), which is always originality, has for a long time been considered the creator of new, world-historical productions.

If your efforts are ever to make "freedom" count, then exhaust its demands. Who is supposed to be free? You, I, we. Free from what? From everything that is not you, not I, not we. So I am the core that is to be delivered from all wrappings—that is to be set free from all

178 Used here as another name for Satan.

cramping shells. What is left when I have been freed from everything I am not? Only I and nothing but I. But freedom has nothing to offer this I itself. As to what more is supposed to happen now, since I have become free, freedom is silent, as our governments, when a prisoner's time is up, just release him and cast him out into desolation.

Now why, if one strives for freedom out of love for the I, why not choose the I itself as beginning, middle and end? Am I not worth more than freedom? Am I not the one who makes myself free, am I not the first? Even unfree, even in a thousand fetters, still I am; and I do not, like freedom, only exist as a future thing, in hopes, but even as the most degraded slave I am also—present.

Think it over well and decide whether you want to put on your banner the dream of "freedom" or the resolution of "egoism," of "ownness." "Freedom" rouses your *rage* against everything that is not you; "egoism" calls you to joy over yourselves, to self-enjoyment. "Freedom" is and remains a longing, a romantic lament, a Christian hope for otherworldliness and the future; "ownness" is a reality that, from itself, removes just as much unfreedom as hinders you by barring your own way. You will not want to renounce what doesn't bother you, and when it starts to bother you, why, you know that "you must obey *yourselves* rather than men"!

Freedom only teaches: Get yourselves rid, relieve yourselves, of everything burdensome; it does not teach you who you yourselves are. Rid, rid! thus its watchword resounds, and you, eager to follow its call, even get rid of yourselves, you "deny yourselves." But ownness calls you back to yourselves, it says, "Come to yourself!" Under the aegis of freedom you get rid of many kinds of things, but something new oppresses you again: "You've gotten rid of the Evil One; evil is left."[179] As *own* you are *actually rid of everything*, and what clings to you *you have accepted*; it is your choice and your pleasure. The *own* one is the *free-born*, the one free from the start; the free one, on the contrary, is only the *freedom addict*, the dreamer and romantic.

The former is *free from the beginning*, because he recognizes nothing but himself; he does not need to free himself first, because from the

179 Based on the words of Mephistopheles in "The Witch's Kitchen" in Part One of Goethe's *Faust*. Line 2509.

start he rejects everything outside himself, because he prizes nothing more than himself, deems nothing higher than himself—in short, because he starts from himself and "comes to himself." Constrained by filial respect, he is still already working to "free" himself of this constraint. Ownness works in the little egoist and gets him the desired freedom.

Thousands of years of civilized culture have obscured what you are to you, have made you believe that you are not egoists, but are *called* to be idealists ("good people"). Shake that off! Don't seek for freedom, which just deprives you of yourselves, in "self-denial"; but rather seek yourselves, become egoists, each one of you become an *almighty I*. Or more clearly: recognize yourselves again, recognize what you actually are, and let go of your hypocritical endeavors, your foolish addiction to be something other than what you are. I call them hypocritical, because you have still remained egoists all these thousands of years, but sleeping, self-deceiving, crazy egoists, you *Heauton Timorumenoses*[180], you self-tormentors. Religions have never yet been able to dispense with "promises" of one sort or another, whether they refer to the afterlife or to this one ("long life", etc.); because the human being is *hungry for gain* and does nothing "gratis." But what about that "doing good for the sake of the good" without prospect of reward? As if here too the reward was not contained in the satisfaction it would grant. Thus religion is also founded on our egoism and exploits it; calculated on our desires, for the sake of one of them, it stifles many others. This then gives the phenomenon of *duped* egoism, where I don't satisfy myself, but one of my desires, e.g., the desire for blessedness. Religion promises me this: "the highest good"; to gain this I pay no attention to any of my other desires and do not nourish them. —All your doings are *unconfessed*, secret; covert and hidden egoism. But because this is egoism that you do not want to confess to yourselves, that you conceal from yourselves, thus not obvious and evident egoism, consequently unconscious egoism, therefore it is *not egoism*, but slavery, service, self-denial; you are egoists, and you are not, because you deny egoism. Where you most

180 The title of a play by the Latin dramatist Publius Terentius Afer. It translates as "the self-tormentor."

seem to be such, you have drawn loathing and contempt upon the word "egoist".

I safeguard my freedom against the world to the extent that I make the world my own, i.e., "win and take it" for myself, by whatever force it requires, by force of persuasion, of request, of categorical demand, yes, even hypocrisy, fraud, etc.; because the means that I use for it depend upon what I am. If I am weak, I have only weak means, like those mentioned above, but which are still good enough for a considerable part of the world. Anyway, fraud, hypocrisy, and lying look worse than they are. Who has not deceived the police, the law? Who has not quickly put on the appearance of respectable loyalty upon encountering the sheriff's henchman, in order to hide an illegal act he may have committed? Whoever has not done this has simply let violence to be done to him; he was a *weakling* from—conscience. I know that my freedom is already diminished when I cannot exercise my will on an other (whether this other be something without will, like a rock, or something with will, like a government, an individual, etc.); I deny my ownness when—in the presence of another—I give myself up, i.e., I give way, stand aside, submit; thus, by *devotion*, *submission*. For it is one thing when I give up my present course because it doesn't lead to the goal and so diverts me down a wrong path; and another when I give myself up. I get around a rock that stands in my way, until I have enough powder to blow it up; I get around the laws of a people, until I've gathered the strength to overthrow them. Since I cannot grasp the moon, is it therefore supposed to be "sacred" to me, an Astarte? If I could only grasp you, I surely would, and if I find a way to come up to you, you shall not frighten me! You incomprehensible one, you shall remain incomprehensible to me only until I have acquired the power of comprehension for myself and call you my *own*; I do not surrender before you, but only bide my time. If I am also content for now to touch something of you, I still remember it of you.

Vigorous people have always done so. When the "devoted" had raised up an undefeated power to be their master and had worshipped it, when they demanded worship from all, then along came such a son of nature that didn't want to submit, and who chased

the worshipped power from its inaccessible Olympus. He called his "Stand still!" to the rolling sun and let the earth go round; the devoted had to make the best of it. He laid his ax to the sacred oaks, and the "devoted" were astonished that no heavenly fire consumed him. He threw the pope off Peter's chair, and the "devoted" didn't know how to prevent it. He is tearing down the business of divine right, and the "devoted" croak in vain and, finally, fall silent.

My freedom becomes complete only when it is my—*power*; but by this I cease to be merely a free person and become an own person. Why is the freedom of the people a "hollow word"? Because the people have no power! With a breath from the living I, I blow peoples over, whether it's the breath of a Nero, a Chinese emperor, or a poor writer. Why then do the chambers of the G– [181] parliament yearn in vain for freedom, and get lectured for it by the cabinet ministers? Because they are not the "powerful"! Power is a fine matter, and useful for many things; for "one goes further with a handful of power than with a bagful of right." You long for freedom? You fools! If you took power, then freedom would come of itself. See, one who has power stands above the law. How does this view taste to you, you "law-abiding" people? But you have no taste!

The call for "freedom" rings out loudly all around. But does one feel or know what a bestowed or imposed freedom has to mean? People don't recognize in the complete fullness of the word that all freedom is essentially—self-liberation, i.e., that I can only have as much freedom as I get through my ownness. Of what use is it to sheep that no one curtails their freedom of speech? They keep on bleating. Give someone who is inwardly a Moslem, a Jew, or a Christian permission to say what he likes: he will still assert narrow-minded nonsense. If, on the other hand, certain others rob you of the freedom to speak and to hear, they understand quite correctly where their temporary advantage lies, since you might be able to say and hear something through which those certain persons would lose their credit.

If they still give you freedom, they are just scoundrels who give more than they have. Because then they give you nothing of their own, but stolen goods; they give you your own freedom, the freedom

181 "German", written in this way to evade the censors.

that you have to take for yourselves; and they *give* it to you only so that you don't take it and hold the thieves and swindlers responsible to boot. In their shrewdness they know well that given (imposed) freedom is no freedom, because only the freedom that one *takes* for oneself, thus the egoist's freedom, rides with full sails. Bestowed freedom strikes its sails as soon as a storm—or calm—comes; it must always have a gentle and moderate breeze.

Here lies the difference between self-liberation and emancipation (acquittal, setting free). Those who today stand in the opposition thirst and shout to be "set free." The princes should "declare their people of age," i.e., emancipate them! Behave as if you are of age, and you are so without any declaration of majority; behave as if you are not so, and you are not worthy of it, and never would be of age even through a declaration of majority. The mature Greeks drove their tyrants away, and the mature son makes himself independent of his father. If the Greeks had waited until their tyrants graciously granted them majority, they might have had a long wait. The sensible father throws the son who won't grow up out, and keeps the house for himself; it serves the fool right.

The one who is set free is nothing but a freedman, a *libertinus*, a dog dragging along a piece of chain: he is an unfree man in the garment of freedom, like the ass in the lion's skin. Emancipated Jews are certainly not made better in themselves, but are only facilitated as Jews, although the one who eases their condition is certainly more than a devout Christian, because the latter couldn't do this without inconsistency. But emancipated or not emancipated, a Jew remains a Jew; the one who is not self-liberated is merely an—emancipated man. The Protestant state can certainly set the Catholics free (emancipate them); but since they do not free themselves, they remain merely—Catholics.

Selfishness and unselfishness have already been talked about. The friends of freedom are enraged against selfishness because in their religious striving after freedom, they cannot free themselves from the sublime "self-denial." The anger of the liberal is aimed at egoism, because the egoist, indeed, never strives for any thing for the thing's sake: the thing must serve him. It is egoistic to ascribe no value of its

own, no "absolute" value to a thing, but rather to seek its value in me. One often hears of studying to get a job, so often considered one of the most repulsive traits of egoistic behavior, because it manifests the most shameful desecration of science; but what is science for, if not to be consumed? If someone doesn't know how to use it for anything better than getting a job, then his egoism is truly a petty one, because this egoist's power is limited; but only someone possessed could blame the egoistic element in it as the desecration of science.

Because Christianity, incapable of letting individuals be considered as unique ones, thought of them only as dependents, and was really nothing but a *social theory,* a doctrine of living together both of the human with God and of human with human; therefore in it, everything "own" must come into the lowest disrepute: selfishness, a mind of one's own, self-will, ownness, self-love, etc. The Christian way of looking at things has gradually on all sides re-stamped honorable words as dishonorable; why not bring them back to honor? So "scorn"[182] in its old sense is the same as a joke, but for Christian seriousness, amusement became a dishonor, because this seriousness has no sense of humor; "nervy" formerly meant only bold, brave; "outrage"[183] was only daring. It's well know what dirty looks were given to the word "reason" for so long.

Our language has adapted itself pretty well to the Christian standpoint, and the general awareness is still too Christian not to shy away from everything non-Christian as from something incomplete or evil. Therefore, it is still bad for "selfishness."

Selfishness, in the Christian sense, means something like this: I look only to whether something is useful to me as a sensual human being. Is sensuality then the whole of my ownness? Am I in my own senses when I abandon myself to sensuality? Do I follow myself, *my own* determination, when I follow that? I am *my own* only when I am in my own power, and not in the power of sensuality or any other thing (God, humanity, authority, law, state, church, etc.); *my selfishness* pursues what is useful to me, this self-owned or self-possessing one.

182 In this passage, I used a thesaurus and an etymological dictionary to find English words for which the etymologies would work similarly. Where I couldn't find one, I have put the German in a footnote.

183 "*Frevel.*"

Besides, one feels oneself forced at every moment to believe in the constantly slandered selfishness as an all-mastering power. In the February 10, 1844 session,[184] Welcker argues a motion on the dependence of judges and sets forth in a detailed speech that removable, dismissible, transferable, and pensionable judges—in short, such members of a court of law as can be damaged and endangered by mere administrative process—are completely unreliable, yes, and forfeit all respect and trust from the people. The profession of judge, Welcker cries, is demoralized by this dependence! In dry words, this means nothing else than that judges will find it more advantageous if they make their judgments as the ministers would have it than as the law would have it. How is that to be helped? Perhaps by reminding the judges of the shame of their venality, and then cultivating the confidence that they will stop and think, and from now on deem justice higher than their own selfishness? No, the body of the people does not achieve this romantic trust, because it feels that selfishness is stronger than any other motive. Thus, the same people who have been judges up to now may remain so, however much one has convinced himself that they acted as egoists; only they must no longer find their selfishness benefiting from the venality of justice, but stand so independent from the government that with a proper judgment they don't overshadow their own thing, their "well-understood interest," but rather gain a comfortable combination of a good salary and esteem among the citizens.

So Welcker and the citizens of Baden consider themselves secure only when they can count on selfishness. What is one supposed to think then of the countless phrases of unselfishness that overflow from their mouths at other times?

I have a different relationship to a cause that I am pursuing selfishly than to one that I am serving unselfishly. One can cite the following identification marks: I can *sin* or commit a *sin* against the latter, but I can only *lose*, push away, or deprive myself of the other, i.e., act imprudently. Free trade is considered in both ways, being looked upon in part as a freedom which may be granted or withdrawn *under certain circumstances*, in part as one which is to be held *sacred in all instances*.

184 Of the Baden legislature.

If I am not concerned about a thing in and for itself, and do not desire it for its own sake, then I desire it only for *the advantage it gives*, for its usefulness, for the sake of another end, such as oysters for a pleasant flavor. Now won't every thing whose final end he himself is, serve the egoist as means? And should he protect a thing that serves him for nothing; for example, should the proletarian protect the state?

Ownness includes all that is own in itself, and again makes honorable what Christian language dishonored. But ownness also has no alien standard, as it is not at all an *idea* like freedom, morality, humanity, etc. It is only a description of—the *owner*.

2.2 The Owner

—do I come to myself and my own through liberalism?

Who does the liberal regard as his equals? Human beings! If you are only a human being—and that you certainly are—the liberal calls you his brother. He asks very little about your private opinions and your private follies, if he can just see the "human being" in you.

But since he takes little notice of what you are *privatim*[185], indeed, lays no value on it in strict observance of his principle, he only sees in you what you are *generatim*[186]. In other words, he sees in you not *you*, but the *species*, not Hans or Kunz, but the human being, not the actual or unique one, but your essence or concept, not the embodied individual but the *spirit*.

As Hans you would not be his equal, because he is Kunz and therefore not Hans; as a human being you are the same thing that he is. And since as Hans you do not exist for him, insofar as he is a liberal and not unconsciously an egoist, he has really made "brotherly love" very easy for himself: he doesn't love the Hans in you, of whom he neither knows nor wants to know anything, but rather the human being.

To see nothing more in you and me than "human beings" is to carry on the Christian point of view, according to which one is for the other nothing but a concept (e.g., one appointed to salvation, etc.), to extremes.

Christianity, properly so-called, gathers us under a less general concept: there we are "the children of God" and "led by the Spirit

185 "In private life."
186 "As a species, class, category."

of God."[187a] Still, not everyone can boast of being God's children, but "the same Spirit that bears witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God, also reveals who are the children of the devil."[188] Consequently, to be a child of God, a person must not be a child of the devil; being a child of God excluded certain people. On the contrary, to be children of humanity, i.e., human beings, we need nothing but to belong to the human species, to be merely specimens of the species. What I am as this I doesn't concern you as a good liberal at all, but is solely my *private affair;* it is enough that we are children of one and the same mother, namely the human species: as a "child of humanity" I am your equal.

What am I to you now? Perhaps this *embodied* I, as I walk and stand? Anything but that. This embodied I, with its thoughts, decisions, and passions, is in your eyes a "private affair" which doesn't concern you, is an "affair for itself." As an "affair for you" there is only my concept, my species concept, only the *human being,* who, though he is called Hans, could just as easily be Peter or Michael. You see in me not me, the embodied person, but rather an unreal being, a phantasm, i.e., a *human being.*

In the course of the Christian centuries, we declared the most varied people to be our equals, but each time according to the measure of that *spirit* which we expected of them, e.g., each one in whom the spirit of the need of redemption could be assumed, then later, each one who has the spirit of righteousness, Finally, each one who shows the human spirit and a human face. So the principle of "equality" varied.

Since equality is now understood as equality of the *human spirit*, an equality that includes *all* human beings has certainly been discovered; for who could deny that we human beings have a human, i.e., nothing other than a human, spirit?

But are we therefore now any farther along than at the beginning of Christianity? At that time we were supposed to have a divine spirit, and now a *human* one; but if the divine one didn't exhaust us, how is the human on supposed to fully express what *we* are? Feuerbach,

187 ▸ Romans 8:14.
188 ▸ Compare Romans 8:16 and John 3:10.

for example, thinks that if he humanizes the divine, he has found the truth. No; if God has tormented us, the "human being" is capable of pressing on us more agonizingly. To put it briefly: that we are human beings, that is the slightest thing about us, and only has meaning insofar as it is one of our *qualities,* our property. Indeed, among other things, I am a human being, as I am, for example, a living being, therefore an animal or beast, or a European, a Berliner, etc.; but anyone who would choose to have regard for me solely as a human being or a Berliner would pay me a regard which would matter little to me. And why? Because he only has regard for one of my *qualities* and not for *me*.

It's also like this with the *spirit*. A Christian spirit, an upright spirit, and the like could likely be my acquired quality, i.e., my property, but *I* am not this spirit; it is mine, I am not its.

Hence, we have in liberalism only the continuation of the old Christian disdain for the *I*, the embodied Hans. Instead of taking me as I am, one looks merely at my property, my qualities, and enters into an honest alliance with me only for the sake of my—possessions; one marries, as it were, what I have, not what I am. The Christian clings to my spirit, the liberal to my humanity.

But if the spirit, which is not treated as the *property* of the embodied *I*, but rather as the true *I* itself, is a ghost, so also the human being, which is not recognized as my property, but rather as the true *I*, is nothing but a phantasm, a thought, a concept.

This is why the liberal also revolves around the same circle as the Christian. Since the spirit of humanity, the human being, dwells in you, you are a human being, just as when the spirit of of Christ dwells in you, you are a Christian; but since it dwells in you only as a second *I*, even though as your true or "better" *I*, it remains other-worldly to you, and you must strive to become completely human. A striving as useless as that of the Christian to completely become a blessed spirit!

Now, after liberalism has proclaimed the human being, one can declare that with this it has only carried out the final consequence of Christianity, and that in truth Christianity originally set itself no other task than to realize the "human being," the "true human being." Hence then, the deception that Christianity sets an infinite value on

the *I*, for example in the doctrine of immortality, in pastoral care, etc., comes to light. No, it gives this value only to the *human being.* Only the *human being* is immortal, and only because I am a human being, am I also so. In fact, Christianity had to teach that no one should perish, just as liberalism also made all human beings equal; but that eternity, like this equality, dealt with only the *humanity* in me, not with me. Only as the carrier and shelterer of humanity do I not die, like, as everyone knows, "the king never dies." Ludwig dies, but the king remains; I die, but my spirit, the human being, remains. To identify me now completely with the human being, someone has invented and laid out the rule that I must become a "real species being."[189]

The **human** *religion* is only the final metamorphosis of the Christian religion. Because liberalism is a religion since it separates my essence from me and sets it above me, since it exalts "humanity" to the same extent that some other religion would its God or idol, since it makes what is mine other-worldly, since it generally makes out of what is mine, out of my qualities and my property, something alien, namely an "essence"; in short, since it places me beneath the human and thereby creates a calling for me. But liberalism also declares itself a religion in form when it demands for this highest essence, humanity, a religious zeal, "a faith that will finally also prove its fiery zeal, a zeal that will be invincible."[190] Since liberalism is a human religion, those who profess it act with tolerance toward those who profess another (Catholic, Jewish, etc.), as Frederick the Great did toward anyone who performed his duties as a subject, whatever fashion of being blessed he might prefer. This religion is now to be elevated to the universal, commonly used one, and be separated from the others as mere "private follies," toward which, by the way, one acts very liberally because they are so insignificant.

One could call it the *state-religion,* the religion of "free states," not in the sense, used up to now, that it is preferred or privileged by the state, but as the religion which the "free state" is not only entitled, but is compelled, to demand of each of its people, regardless of whether

189 ▸ For example, Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*, ed. Arnold Ruge (Paris, 1844), p. 197.

190 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* [*The Jewish Question*] (Brunswick, 1843) p. 61.

privately he is Jewish, Christian, or whatever. For it does the same service to the state as filial piety does to the family. If the family is to be recognized and maintained in its continued existence, by each of its members, the ties of blood must be sacred to him, and his feeling for it must be that of piety, of respect for the ties of blood, so that for him every blood relation becomes a sacred being. So also for every member of the state-community, this community must be sacred, and the concept that is highest for the state must also be highest for him.

But what concept is highest for the state? Surely, to be a truly human society: a society into which everyone who is really a human being, i.e., *not an inhuman monster*, can gain admittance as a member. No matter how far state tolerance goes, it stops at the inhuman monster and what is inhuman. And yet, this "inhuman monster" is a human being, and the "inhuman" itself is something human, indeed, possible only to a human being, not to any beast; it is simply something "humanly possible." But even though every inhuman monster is a human being, still the state excludes him, i.e., locks him up, or transforms him from a state-comrade to a prison-comrade (a lunatic asylum- or hospital-comrade for communism).

It is not all that hard to say in plain words what an inhuman monster is: it is a human being who doesn't correspond to the *concept* human being, as the inhuman is something human that doesn't fit the *concept* of the human. Logic calls this a "nonsensical judgment." Would one be able to make this judgment that one can be a human being without being a human being, if one did not admit to the hypothesis that the concept of the human being can be separated from the existence, that the essence could be separated from the appearance? They say, indeed, he *appears* to be a human being, but he *is* not a human being.

Human beings have pronounced this "nonsensical judgment" through a long series of centuries! Indeed, what is still more, in this long time there were only—*inhuman monsters*. Which individuals would have corresponded to its concept? Christianity knows only one human being, and this one—Christ—is straight away again an inhuman monster in the reverse sense, namely, a superhuman human being, a "God." Only the—inhuman monster is an *actual* human being.

Human beings who are not human beings, what else would they be but *ghosts?* Every actual human being, because he doesn't correspond to the concept "human being," or because he is not the "human species," is a phantasm. But would I still remain an inhuman monster if I reduced humanity, which only towered over me and remained other-worldly to me as my ideal, my task, my essence or concept, to my own *quality*, inherent in me, so that the human being is nothing other than my humanity, my human condition, and everything that I do is therefore human, simply because I do it, but not because it corresponds to the concept "human being"? *I* am actually the human being and the inhuman monster in one; because I am a human being and at the same time more than a human being; I am the I of this, my mere quality.

It had to come to this at last, that we were no longer only expected to be Christians, but to become human beings; since, though we could never really even become Christians, but always remained "poor sinners" (for the Christian was also just an unattainable ideal), still the absurdity of this did not come to our awareness and the deception was easier than now, when the demand is made on us, who are human beings and act humanly, and indeed cannot do otherwise than to be such and act so, that we should be human beings, "actual human beings."

Indeed, our present-day states, since all sorts of things from their churchly mother still stick to them, impose on their members various obligations (e.g., churchly religiosity) which really don't at all concern these states; but still, on the whole, they do not deny their significance, because they want to be seen as *human societies,* of which the human being as human being can be a member, even if he is less privileged than other members; most allow followers of every religious sect, and accept people without distinction of race or nation: Jews, Turks, Moors, etc. can become French citizens. The state in its acceptance only observes whether one is a *human being.* The church, as a society of believers, could not accept everyone into her fold; the state, as a society of human beings, can. But when the state has fully carried out its principle, assuming that all its members are nothing but human beings (up to now, even the North Americans assume

their own members have religion, at least the religion of uprightness, of honesty), then it has dug its own grave. While it will imagine that in its members it possesses nothing but human beings, in the meantime these have become nothing but *egoists,* each of whom uses it for his egoistic powers and ends. "Human society" is shipwrecked on the egoists; because they no longer relate to each other as *human beings,* but appear egoistically as an *I* against a *you*, and yours is altogether different from me and opposing me.

If the state must count on our humanity, then it's the same when one says: it must count on your *morality.* To see the humanity in each other and to act as human beings toward each other, this is called moral behavior. It is in every way the "spiritual love" of Christianity. If, thus, I see the humanity in you, as I see the humanity in me, and see nothing but the humanity, then I take care of you the way I take care of myself, because we both signify nothing but the mathematical proposition: A = C and B = C, therefore A = B, i.e., I am nothing but a human being and you are nothing but a human being, thus I and you are the same. Morality is not compatible with egoism, because it doesn't accept *me*, but only the humanity in me. But if the state is a *society of human beings,* not a union of *I*s, each of whom only looks out for himself, then it cannot exist without morality and must attach importance to morality.

Therefore, the two of us, the state and I, are enemies. For me, the egoist, the welfare of this "human society" is not in my heart. I sacrifice nothing to it, I only use it; but to be able to use it completely, I transform it instead into my property and my creation; in other words, I destroy it and in its place form the *association of egoists.*

So the state betrays its hostility against me by demanding that I should be a human being, which assumes that I am not one and can count for it as an "inhuman monster"; it imposes being human on me as a *duty*. Further it requires that I do nothing which would stop *it* from persisting. Its continued existence is supposed to be sacred for me. Then I should not be an egoist, but an "honest, upright," i.e., moral human being. Enough: I am supposed to be powerless and respectful before it and its continued existence.

This state, indeed not an existing one, but one still in need of being

created, is the ideal of progressive liberalism. It is supposed to be a true "human society," in which every "human being" finds a place. Liberalism intends to realize "humanity," i.e., create a world for it; and this would be the *human* world or the universal (communist) human society. Someone has said: "The church could only take the spirit into account; the state should take the human being into account."[191] But isn't "the human being" "spirit"? The core of the state is precisely "the human being," this unreality, and is itself only a "human society." The world which the believer (believing spirit) creates is called the church; the world which the human being (human or humane spirit) creates is called the state. But that is not *my* world. I never accomplish anything *human* in the abstract, but always *my own* things; i.e., *my* human action is different from every other human action and only through this difference an actual action belonging to me. The human in it is an abstraction and, as such, a spirit, i.e., an abstracted essence.

Bruno Bauer declares, for example on page 84 of *Die Judenfrage,* that the truth of criticism is the final truth, and in fact the truth that Christianity itself was seeking—namely "the human being." He says: "[T]he history of the Christian world is the history of the highest struggle for truth, for in it—and only in it!—is the concern for the discover of the final or the first truth—humanity and freedom."

Well then, we'll acquiesce to this gain and take *humanity* as the newfound result of Christianity and of the religious or ideal strivings of humanity in general. Who is now the human being? *I* am! The human being, the end and the outcome of Christianity, is, as *I*, the beginning and the usable material of the new history, a history of enjoyment after the history of sacrifices, a history not of human beings or humanity, but of—*my own*. *The* human being is considered as the universal. Now then, I and the egoistic are actually universal, because everyone is an egoist and goes for himself about everything. The Jewish man is not purely egoistic, because the Jew still devotes *himself* to Jehovah; the Christian is not so, because the Christian lives by the grace of God and submits *himself* to him. As a Jew and as a

191 ▸ Moses Hess (anonymously), *Die europäische Triarchie* [*The European Triarchy*] (Leipzig, 1841, p. 76)

Christian alike, a human being only satisfies certain of his wants, only a certain need, not *himself*; a *half* egoism, because it is the egoism of a half-human-being, of half himself, half Jew; half-self-owner, half slave. This is also why Jews and Christians always half-exclude each other; in other words, they recognize each other as human beings, but they exclude each other as slaves, because they are servants of two different masters. If they could be complete egoists, they would *totally* exclude each other and so hold more firmly together. Their shame is not that they exclude each other, but that they only do it *halfway*. Bruno Bauer, on the other hand, says that Jews and Christians can only consider and mutually treat each other as "human beings" if they give up the particular essence which separates them and binds them to eternal segregation, recognize the universal essence of "humanity," and regard this as their "true essence."

In his account, the fault of Jews and Christians alike lies in their wanting to be and have something "distinctive," instead of just being human beings and striving for what is human, namely, "universal human rights." He thinks their basic error consists in their belief that they are "privileged," possess "prerogatives," generally in the belief in prerogative. He opposed this with universal human rights. Human rights!

The human being is *the human being in general*, and to this extent, everybody is human. Now, according to the communists, everybody is supposed to have eternal human rights, and enjoy themselves in the perfect "democracy," or as one ought to more properly call it—anthropocracy. But only I have everything that I get for myself; as a human being I have nothing. One wants to let everything good flow to every human being, merely because he has the title "human being." But I place the emphasis on *me,* not on my being *human.*

The human being is something only as my quality (property) like masculinity or femininity. The ancients found the ideal in one's being *male* in the full sense; their virtue is *virtus* and *aretē*, i.e., manliness. What is one supposed to think of a woman who only wanted to be a complete "woman?" That is not given to all of them, and some would set themselves an unattainable goal in this. She is, however, female in any case, by nature; femininity is her quality, and she doesn't need "true femininity." I am human, just like the earth is a planet. As

ridiculous as it would be to set the earth the task of being a "correct star," it is just as ridiculous to burden me with the calling to be a "correct human being."

When Fichte says, "the *I* is all," this seems to harmonize perfectly with my statements. But it's not that the *I is* all, but the *I destroys* all, and only the self-dissolving *I*, the never-being *I*, the—*finite I* is actually I. Fichte speaks of the "absolute" *I*, but I speak of me, the transient *I*.

How readily the opinion suggests itself that *human being* and *I* say the same thing, and yet one sees, for example, in Feuerbach, that the expression "human being" is supposed to describe the absolute *I*, the species, not the transient, individual *I*. Egoism and humanity (humaneness) ought to mean the same thing, but according to Feuerbach the individual can "raise himself only above the limits of his individuality, but not above the laws, the positive essential conditions of his species."[192] By itself, the species is nothing, and if the individual raises himself above the limits of his individuality, this is rather just he himself as an individual; he is only so long as he raises himself, he is only so long as he doesn't remain what he is; otherwise he would be finished, dead. *The* human being is only an ideal, the species only something thought. To be *a* human being doesn't mean fulfilling the ideal of *the* human being, but rather showing *oneself*, the individual. It is not how I realize the *generally human* that needs to be my task, but how I satisfy myself. *I* am my species, am without norm, without law, without model, etc. Perhaps I can make very little out of myself; this little, however, is all, and is better than what I allow the power of others to make out of me, through the training of custom, religion, law, the state, etc. Better—if we're to talk of better at all—an ill-bred brat, than an overly mature child; better a reluctant human being than one who is willing to do anything. The bratty and reluctant one is still on his way to forming his own will for himself; the prematurely knowing and willing one is defined by the "species," the general requirements, etc.; this is law to him. He is *defined* by it: then, what else is the species to him than his "definition," his "calling"? Whether I look upon "hu-

192 ▸ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 2nd enlarged edition (Leipzig, 1843), p. 401.

manity," the species, as the ideal to emulate, or upon God and Christ with the same desire, what essential difference would there be? At most, the former is more wishy-washy than the latter. As the individual is the whole of nature, so too is he the whole of the species.

Everything that I do, think, etc., in short, my expression or manifestation, is indeed *qualified* by what I am. The Jew, for example, can only want thus or so, can only present himself thus; the Christian can only present and manifest himself in a Christian way, etc. If it were possible that you could be a Jew or a Christian, you would certainly bring only what was Jewish or Christian to light; but it is not possible; through the most intense change, you still remain an *egoist*, a sinner against that concept, i.e., *you* are not = Jew.[193] Now, because the egoistic always keeps shining through, some have asked for a more complete concept that actually fully expresses what you are, and that, because it is your true nature, contains all the laws of your activity. The most perfect thing of the kind has been reached in "humanity." As a Jew you are too little and the Jewish is not your task; to be a Greek, a German, is not enough. But be a—human being, then you have everything; look upon the human as your calling.

Now I know what I am supposed to do, and the new catechism can be written. Again the subject is subservient to the predicate, the individual to something universal; rule is again protected by an *idea*, and the foundation of a new *religion* laid. This is a step forward in the religious, and especially Christian, realm, not a step beyond it.

The step beyond leads into the *unspeakable*.[194] For me, miserable language has no word, and "the Word," the Logos, is for me a "mere word."

One seeks for *my essence*. If it isn't the Jew, the German, etc., then, at any rate, the human being. "The human being is my essence."

I am abhorrent or repugnant to myself; I am horrified and disgusted with myself, I am an abomination to myself, or, I am never enough for myself and never do enough for myself. From such feelings springs self-dissolution or self-criticism. Religiousness begins with self-denial and ends with completed criticism.

193 I have chosen to use the form Stirner used in the German, where he writes this phrase using the mathematical symbol: "*Du* bist nicht = Jude."

194 "*Unsagbare*" could also be translated as "nameless" or "inexpressible," each of which carries its own significant connotations for Stirner's project.

I am possessed and want to get rid of the "evil spirit." How do I get started? I confidently commit the sin that to the Christian seems the worst, the sin and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. "He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit has no forgiveness forever, but is guilty before the eternal judgment!"[195] I want no forgiveness and have no fear of the judgment.

The human being is the last evil *spirit* or phantasm, the most deceptive and the most intimate, the craftiest liar with the honest face, the father of lies.

Since the egoist turns against the impositions and concepts of the present, he relentlessly carries out the most unbridled—*desecration.* Nothing is sacred to him.

It would be foolish to maintain that there is no power above mine. Only the attitude that I take toward it will be quite different than that of the religious age: I will be the *enemy* of every higher power, whereas religion teaches us to make it our friend and to humble ourselves before it.

The *desecrater* tenses his strength against any *fear of God,* because fear of God would determine him in everything that he kept as sacred. Whether in the God-man the God or the man exercises sanctifying power, whether anything is thus held sacred for God's or for the human being's (humanity's) sake, this doesn't change the fear of God, because the human being is revered as the "supreme being"[196] as much as from the specifically religious standpoint God as "supreme being" requires our fear and reverence[197], and both make an impression on us.

The fear of God, as such, suffered a shock long ago, and a more or less conscious "atheism," externally recognizable in a widespread "unchurchliness," has involuntarily become the tone. But what was taken from God has been added to the human being, and the power of

195 ▸ Mark 3:29.

196 "*höchstes Wesen*" can also be translated as "highest essence," a phrase of significance from the Hegelian standpoint. In this context, Stirner surely intends both meanings, since he is relentless in his mockery of both religion and Hegelian categories and terms.

197 A bit of wordplay is lost in translation here. In German, fear is *Furcht* and reverence is *Ehrfurcht*.

humanity increased to the same degree as that of piety lost weight, the "human being" is the God of today, and fear of humanity has taken the place of the old fear of God.

But since the human being only signifies another supreme being, in fact, nothing has occurred but a metamorphosis in the supreme being, and the fear of humanity is merely a modified form of the fear of God.

Our atheists are pious people.

If in the so-called feudal time we held everything as a fief from God, we find in the liberal period the same feudal relationship occurring with humanity. God was the lord, now the human being is the lord; God was the mediator, now the human being is; God was the spirit, now the human being is. In this three-fold way, the feudal relation has undergone a transformation. For now, first of all, we hold *our power* as a fief from all-powerful humanity, and because this power comes from a higher being, it is not called power or force, but rather "right": "human rights"; we further hold our position in the world as a fief from it, because it, the mediator mediates our *intercourse*, which therefore may not be other than "human"; finally, we hold *ourselves* as a fief from it, that is, our own value, or all that we are worth, for we are worth exactly nothing when *it* does not dwell in us, and when or where we are not "human." The power is humanity's, the world is humanity's, I am humanity's.

But am I not at liberty to declare *myself* the entitler, the mediator and my own self? Then it goes like this:

My power *is* my property.

My power *gives* me property.

My power *am* I myself, and through it I am my property.

2.2.1 My Power

Right[198] is the *spirit of society*. If society has a *will*, this will is simply right: it exists only through right. But since it exists only by exercising a *dominance* over individuals, right is its **sovereign will**. Aristotle says justice is the advantage of *society*.

198 "*Recht*" refers to both "right" in the sense, for example, of human rights or civil rights, and to law. Stirner seems to play on both meanings here, so keep that in mind when reading this passage.

All existing right is—*alien right*; it is a right that someone "gives" me, "does right by me." But would I therefore be in the right if all the world granted right to me? And yet what else is the right that I obtain in the state, in society, other than a right from strangers? When a blockhead makes me out to be right, I grow suspicious of my right; I don't like his accepting that I'm right. But even when a wise man grants that I'm right, I am still not right because of this. Whether *I* am right is completely independent of the fool's or the wise man's granting it.

Nevertheless, we have striven for this right up to now. We seek for right and turn to the court for that purpose. To which? To a royal, a papal, a people's court, etc. Can a sultanic court speak of another right than the one that the sultan has proclaimed as right? Can it grant that I'm right when I seek for a right which doesn't agree with the sultan's right? Can it grant me, for example, high treason as a right, since it's certainly not a right to the sultan's mind? As the censorship court, can it grant me the free expression of opinion as a right, since the sultan doesn't want to hear anything about this right *of mine?* What do I seek from this court? I'm seeking sultanic right, not *my* right, I'm seeking—*alien* right. As long as this alien right agrees with mine, to be sure, I will find the right in it too.

The state does not allow you to clash man to man; it opposes the *duel*. Even a scuffle, though neither of the fighters calls for the police, will be punished, except when it is not an *I* thrashing a *you*, but, say, a head of the family thrashing a child. The *family* is entitled to this[199], and in its name the father; I as unique am not.

The *Vossische Zeitung*[200] presents to us the "state of rights." There everything is supposed to be decided by the judge and a *court*. The supreme court of censorship counts for it as a "court" where "right gets dispensed." What sort of right? The right of censorship. To recognize the judgments of that court as right, one must regard censorship as right. But people still believe that this court offers a protection. Yes, protection against an individual censor's error: it only protects the

199 Of course, this is no longer the case. Now the state will intervene even when a father beats his child, because the child, by law, belongs to the State first, and only to the family by permission of the State.

200 A Berlin daily newspaper.

censorship legislator against the wrong interpretation of his will, but makes his law firmer against writers through the "sacred power of right."

Whether I am in the right or not, there is no judge other than myself. About that others can only judge whether they agree with my right, and whether it exists for them as a right too.

Now let's take the matter yet another way. I am supposed to revere sultanic right in the sultanate, the people's rights in the republic, canonical right in Catholic parishes, etc. I am supposed to subordinate myself to these rights; I am supposed to regard them as sacred. A "sense of right" and "legal mind" are so firmly planted in people's heads that the most revolutionary people of our times want to subject us to a new "sacred right," the "right of society", the social group, the right of humanity, the "right of all," and so on. The right "of all" is supposed to go before *my* right. As a right of all, however, it would also be my right, as I am included in all; but that it is at the same time a right of others, or even of all others, doesn't move me to maintain it. I will not defend it as a *right of all,* but as *my* right; and everyone else may see to it how he maintains it for himself as well. The right of all (for example, the right to eat) is a right of each individual. Let each keep this right unimpaired for *himself,* then all practice it spontaneously; but let him not take care of all, let him not get all worked up over it as a right of all.

But social reformers preach to us a "*right of society.*" There the individual becomes society's slave, and is right only when society *grants* that he is right, i.e., when he lives according to society's *laws,* and so is—*loyal*. Whether I am loyal in a despotic regime or in a "society" *à la* Weitling,[201] it is the same lack of rights, insofar as in both cases I don't have *my* right but *alien* right.

With rights one always asks: "What or who gives me the right?" Answer: God, love, reason, nature, humanity, etc. No, only *your power, your* strength gives you the right (your reason, for example, may give it to you).

Communism, which assumes that human beings "have equal rights

201 A German utopian socialist who promoted communism through a kind of radical Christian doctrine.

by nature," refutes its own propositions to the point that human beings have no rights at all by nature. Because it doesn't want to recognize, for example, that parents have rights "by nature" against their children or the children against their parents; it abolishes the family. Nature gives parents, siblings, etc., no rights at all. Anyway, this whole revolutionary or Babouvist[202] principle[203] rests on a religious, i.e., false viewpoint. Who can ask for "rights" if he is not himself coming from a religious standpoint? Isn't "the right" a religious concept, i.e., something sacred? "*Equality of rights,*" as the revolution put it forward, is only another form of "Christian equality," the "equality of brethren, of God's children, of Christians, etc."; in short, *fraternité*. Each and every inquiry after rights deserves to be lashed by Schiller's words:

Many a year I've used my nose
To smell the onion and the rose;
Is there any proof that shows
That I've a right to the same nose?[204]

When the revolution stamped equality as a "right," it fled into the religious sphere, the region of the sacred, of the ideal. Thus, since then, the fight for "sacred, inalienable human rights." Against "eternal human rights" the "well-earned rights of the existing order" are asserted quite naturally and with equal right: right against right, where of course one is denounced by the other as "wrong." This has been the *contest of rights*[205] since the revolution.

You want to be "in the right" against the rest. You can't do this;

202 Babouvist after François Noël (Gracchus) Babeuf, a proponent of radical egalitarian communism active in the French revolution, who organized a "Conspiracy of Equals" to overthrow the Directory which he thought had betrayed the ideals of the revolution. He was arrested, committed suicide, and was still guillotined.

203 ▸ See *Die Kommunisten in der Schweiz nach den bei Weitling vorgefundenen Papieren. Wortlicher Abdruck dew Kommissionalberichtes an die H. Regierung des Standes Zürich* (Zurich, 1843), p.3.

204 From *Xenien*, a collection of satirical epigrams published jointly by Goethe and Schiller.

205 *Rechtsstreit* usually refers to a lawsuit.

against them you remain forever "in the wrong"; since indeed they wouldn't be your opponents if they weren't in "their right" too; they will always make you out to be "in the wrong." But your right against the rest is a higher, greater, *more powerful* right, is it not? Not at all! Your right is not more powerful if you are not more powerful. Do Chinese[206] subjects have a right to freedom? Just grant it to them then, and see how great a mistake you've made in this: because they don't know how to use freedom, they have no right to it, or, more clearly, because they don't have freedom, they don't have the right to it. Children have no right to majority because they are immature, i.e., because they are children. Peoples who let themselves be kept in immaturity have no right to majority; only when they ceased to be immature would they have the right to majority.[207] This means nothing else than: what you have the power to be, you have the right to. I derive all right and authorization from *myself;* I am *entitled* to everything that I have the power for. I am entitled to overthrow Zeus, Jehovah, God, etc., if I *can;* if I can't do it, these gods will always remain in the right and in power against me, but I will be afraid of their right and power in impotent "fear of God," will keep their commandments and believe I do right in everything I do for their right, just as the Russian border guards consider themselves authorized to shoot escaping suspects dead, because they murder on a "higher authority," i.e., "rightly." But I am authorized by myself to murder if I do not forbid it to myself, if I am not myself afraid of murder as a "wrong." This view forms the basis of Chamisso's poem, *Das Mordtal*,[208] where the gray-haired Indian murderer gains the respect of the white man

206 The references to "China and Japan" and to "the Chinese" and "the Japanese" is a ploy Stirner used to avoid censorship they stand for. But beyond this, it is also a joke at the expense of the historical and cultural theories prevalent among Hegelians and other German intellectuals of the time. Stirner has already used these theories mockingly in the section of "Human Beings of Ancient and Modern Times" entitled "The Hierarchy."

207 There are several possible ways to translate this passage playing on majority and minority in the legal sense relating to being of legal age, but also on maturity and immaturity. I have chosen to translate it this way to better clarify Stirner's point that the "right" to be considered of "age" lies not in something granted to one, but in one's capacity and willingness to act "maturely" or "responsibly." In other words, one grants oneself majority by how one acts.

208 "The Valley of Murder."

whose brothers he murdered. The only thing I am not authorized to do is what I don't do with free courage, i.e., what I do not authorize myself to do.

I decide whether it is the *right* in *me*; *outside* me there is no right. If it is right *for me*, then it is right. Possibly, this won't make it right for others; that's their problem, not mine: they may defend themselves. And if something wasn't right for the whole world, but was right for me, i.e., I wanted it, then I would ask nothing about the whole world. This is what everyone does who knows how to value *himself*, everyone to the degree that he is an egoist, because power goes before right, and that—quite rightly.

Because I am "by nature" a human being, Babeuf says, I have an equal right to the enjoyment of all goods. Shouldn't he also say: because I am "by nature" a first-born prince I have a right to the throne? Human rights and "well-earned" rights come to the same thing, namely, to *nature*, which *gives* me a right, i.e., to birth (and, further, inheritance, etc.). "I am born as a human being" is equal to: "I am born as a king's son." The natural human being only has a natural right, by reason of power, and natural claims: he has birthright and birth claims. But nature cannot *entitle* me, i.e., enable me or make me powerful, to that to which only my act entitles me. That the king's child puts himself above other children, even that is his act, which assures to him the privilege; and that the other children approve and recognize this act, that is their act, that makes them worthy—to be subjects.

Whether nature, or God, or the people's choice, gives me a right, it is all the same *alien* right, it is a right I did not give or take to myself.

So the communists say: equal work entitles people to equal enjoyment. Formerly, people raised the question of whether the "virtuous" shouldn't be "happy" on earth. The Jews actually concluded: "That it may go well with you on earth." No, equal work doesn't entitle you to it, but rather equal enjoyment alone entitles you to equal enjoyment. Enjoy, then you are entitled to enjoyment. If you have worked and let enjoyment be taken away from you, then—"it serves you right."

If you *take* enjoyment, it is your right; if, on the contrary, you only yearn for it without helping yourself to it, it still remains, as before,

a "well-earned" right of those who are privileged for enjoyment. It is *their* right, as by helping yourself it would become *your* right.

The dispute over "property rights" staggers in vehement agitation. The communists state: "The earth rightfully belongs to those who till it, and the products of the same to those who produce them."[209] I think it belongs to the one who knows how to take it, or who doesn't let it be taken from him, doesn't let himself be deprived of it. If he appropriates it, then not only the earth, but also the right to it, belongs to him. This is *egoistic right,* i.e., it is right for *me,* therefore it is right.

Otherwise right simply has "a wax nose." The tiger that attacks me has the right, and I, who strike him down, also have the right. I defend not my *right* against him, but rather *myself.*

Since human rights are always something given, it always comes down to the rights which people give, i.e., "grant," to each other. If one grants the right of existence to newborn children, then they have the right; if one doesn't grant it to them, as was the case among the Spartans and the ancient Romans, then they do not have it. Because only society can give or concede it to them; they themselves cannot take it or give it to themselves. Someone will object: the children still had the right to exist "by nature"; only the Spartans refused *recognition* to this right. But then they simply had no right to this recognition, no more than they had to the recognition of their lives by the wild animals to which they were thrown.

People talk so much about *birthright,* and complain:

> *It is—alas!—not a question*
> *Of the rights that were born us.*

So what sort of right would be born with me? The right to be first-born heir, to inherit the throne, to enjoy a princely or noble education; or, again, since poor parents bore me, to—to get free schooling, to be clothed through charitable contributions, and finally to earn my bread and herring in the coal mines or the weaver's chair? Aren't these my birthrights, rights that have come down to me

209 ▸ August Becker, *Die Volksphilosophie unserer Tage* (Neumünster near Zurich, 1843), pp. 22ff.

from my parents through *birth?* You think—no; you think, these are rights improperly so-called; these are just the rights that you strive to abolish through *real birthright*. To establish this, you go back to the simplest thing and state that everyone by birth is *equal* to the other, namely, a human being. I will grant you that everyone is born as a human being, therefore the newborn are *equal* to each other in this. Why are they? Only because they appear and act as nothing other than mere—*human children,* naked little human beings. But they are therefore immediately different from those who have already made something of themselves and are no longer mere "human children," but rather—children of their own creation. The latter possess more than just birthrights: they have *won* rights. What a contrast, what a battlefield! The old battle between inborn human rights and well-won rights. Go on invoking your birthrights; people will not fail to oppose you with their well-won rights. Both stand on the "ground of right"; because each of the two has a "right" against the other, the one the inborn or natural right, the other the won or "well-won" right.

If you remain on the ground of rights, you remain in—arrogance.[210] The other cannot give you your right; he cannot "do right" by you. Whoever has power has—right; if you don't have the former, you don't have the latter either. Is this wisdom so hard to attain? Just look at the powerful and their doings! Of course, we are talking here only of China and Japan. Just try it once, you Chinese and Japanese, to make them out to be in the wrong, and learn from experience how they throw you into prison. (Only don't confuse this with the "well-meaning advice" which—in China and Japan—are permitted, because they don't hinder the powerful, but possibly *aid him.)* For anyone who wants to make them out to be in the wrong, only one

210 ▸ "I beg you spare my lungs! One who insists on being right and merely has a tongue, will indeed be right!"

[*Translator's comment:* Stirner includes this apparent misquote from Goethe's *Faust* as a note here. The sentence above to which this note is added is a wordplay. "Ground of right" is *Rechtsboden* and "arrogance" is *Rechthaberei.* This latter word has several possible translations, among them "a know-it-all attitude," "self-opinionatedness" (which Byington chose), "bossiness," "cantankerousness," "dogmatism," and "arrogance." Both this (mis)quote and the context that follows indicated that "cantankerousness" or "arrogance" came closest to Stirner's intent. I chose the latter at the suggestion of a friend.]

way would be open for doing that, that of power. If he deprives them of their *power,* then he has *really* made them out to be in the wrong, deprived them of their right; in any other case, he can only make a little fist in his pocket or fall victim as an impertinent fool.

In short, if you Chinese and Japanese didn't ask after rights, if you didn't ask, in particular, after the rights "that were born with you," then you'd have no need at all to ask after the well-won rights either.

You shrink back from others, because you believe you see next to them the *ghost of right,* which, as in Homeric battles, seems to fight like a goddess at their side, helping them. What do you do? Do you throw the spear? No, you sneak around to win the phantasm for yourself, so that it fights on your side: you court the ghost for its favor. Another would simply ask this: Do I want what my enemy wants? "No!" Now then, though a thousand devils or gods may fight for him, I'll still strike out at him.

The "rights-based state," as the *Vossische Zeitung* among others supports it, demands should only be removable by the *judge*, not by the *administration*. Vain illusion. If it were determined by law that an official who is seen drunk once should lose his office, the judge would have to sentence him on the word of the witnesses, etc. In short, the legislator would only have to give all possible reasons which entail the loss of office, however laughable they might be (for example, one who laughs in his superiors' faces, one who does not go to church every Sunday, one who does not take Communion every four weeks, one who runs up debts, one who involves himself in dirty dealings, one who shows no determination, etc., should be removed. The legislator might think to establish these things, for example, through a court of honor); then the judge would merely have to investigate whether the defendant "was guilty" of those "offenses," and after the presentation of evidence against him, "by right" pronounce the sentence of removal.

The judge is lost when he stops being *mechanical,* when "the rules of evidence abandon" him. Then he has only an opinion, like everyone else, and if he decides according to this *opinion*, then this is *no longer an official action.* As judge, he must decide only according to law. I prefer the old French parliaments, that wanted to examine for

themselves what should be a matter of right, and only wanted to register it after their own consent. They at least judged according to their own right, and weren't willing to stoop to being machines of the legislature, although of course, as judges, they had to become their own machines.

People say that the penalty is the criminal's right. But impunity is his right as well. If he succeeds in his undertaking, it serves him right, and if he does not succeed, it also serves him right. You make your bed and lie in it. If someone goes recklessly into dangers and dies in them, we'd probably say: "it serves him right, he wanted nothing better." But if he overcame the dangers, i.e., his power was victorious, he would also be in the right. If a child plays with a knife and cuts himself, it serves him right; but if he doesn't cut himself, this also serves him right. Thus, right doubtless befalls the criminal when he suffers what he risked; also we ask why he risked it, since he knew the possible consequences! But the penalty that we inflict upon him is only our right, not his. Our right reacts against his, and he is "in the wrong" because—we get the upper hand.

But what is right, what is a rightful thing in a society, also comes down to words—in the *law*.

Whatever the law may be, it must be respected by—the loyal citizen. Thus the legal mind of Old England is praised. This corresponds completely to that Euripidean proverb (*Orestes*, 412): "We serve the gods, whatever the gods are." *Laws in general, gods in general,* that's how far we are today.

People try to distinguish *law* from arbitrary *command*, from ordinance: the former comes from a rightful authority. But a law over human action (ethical law, state law, etc.) is always a *declaration of will,* and so a command. Yes, even if I gave myself the law, it would only be my command, which I can refuse to obey at the next moment. One may surely declare what one is willing to put up with, and thus, through a law, refuse to tolerate the opposite, otherwise he would treat the transgressor as his enemy; but no one has command over *my* actions, to prescribe them for me or make laws for me about them. I must put up with him treating me as his *enemy*, but never with him

treating me as his *creature*, or with him making *his* reason, or even unreason, my guideline.

States last only so long as there is a *ruling will* and this ruling will is considered synonymous with one's own will. The lord's will is—law. What good are your laws to you when no one follows them; what good your commands, when no one lets himself be commanded? The state cannot give up its claim to determine the individual's will, to speculate and count on this. For the state, it is absolutely necessary that no one have a *will of his own;* if someone had one, the state would have to exclude (imprison, banish, etc.) this one; if everyone had one, they would do away with the state. The state is not thinkable without domination and slavery (subjection); because the state must will to be the lord of all that it contains, and this will is called the "will of the state."

Whoever has to count on the lack of will in others in order to exist is a shoddy product of these others, as the master is a shoddy product of the slave. If servility ceased, it would be all over for lordship.

My *own will* is the destroyer of the state; the latter therefore denounces it as "self-will." Own will and the state are powers in deadly hostility, between which no "perpetual peace"[211] is possible. As long as the state holds its ground, it portrays own will, its ever-hostile opponent, as irrational, evil, etc.; and the latter lets itself be talked into this, that indeed it really is so, merely because it still lets itself be talked into this: it has not yet come to itself and to the awareness of its dignity, and so is still incomplete and easily persuaded.

Every state is a despotism, whether the despot be one or many, or, as some like to imagine a republic, all be lords, i.e., play the despot over each other. This is the case every time when a given law, the will expressed perhaps in the opinion of a popular assembly, should be from then on *law* for the individual, to which he *owes obedience*, or towards which he has the *duty* of obedience. Even if one were to imagine the case where every individual in the people had expressed the same will, and through this a complete "collective will" came into being, the matter would still be the same. Wouldn't I be bound today and henceforth by my will of yesterday? My will in this case

211 A reference to Kant's essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*.

would be *frozen*. Tiresome *stability*. My creation, namely a particular expression of will, would have become my commander. But I in my will, I the creator, would be hampered in my flow and my dissolution. Because I was a fool yesterday, I must remain one the rest of my life. So in state-life, I am in the best case—I might as well say the worst case—a slave to myself. Because I was a willer yesterday, today I am will-less, yesterday voluntary, today involuntary.

How to change? Only by recognizing no *duty*, i.e., by not *binding* myself or allowing myself to be bound. If I have no duty, then I also know no law.

"But they will bind me!" No one can bind my will, and my unwillingness remains free.

"Why, everything would have to go topsy-turvy, if everyone could do what he wanted!" Well, who says that everyone can do everything? What are you there for then, you who don't need to put up with everything? Defend yourself, and no one will do anything to you! Anyone who wants to break your will is dealing with you, and is your *enemy*. Act against him as such. If a few million stand behind you for your protection, then you are an imposing power and will have an easy victory. But even if you impress your opponent as a power, still you are not therefore a sacred authority; he must then be a thief. He does not owe you respect or esteem, so long as he looks out for your power.

We are accustomed to classifying states according to the different ways in which "the supreme power" is distributed. If one individual has it—monarchy; if all—democracy; etc. So the supreme power! Power against whom? Against the individual and his "self-will." The state practices "violence," the individual should not do this. State behavior is an act of violence, and it calls its violence "legal right"; that of the individual, "crime." Crime, so the violence of the individual is called; and he overcomes state violence only through crime, when he is of the opinion that the state is not above him, but that he is above the state.

Now if I wanted to act ridiculously, as a well-meaning person, I could admonish you to make no laws that impair my self-development, self-activity, self-creation. I don't give this advice. Because if

you followed it, you would be unwise, and I would be cheated out of my entire profit. I demand nothing of you, because no matter what I asked for, you would still be domineering legislators, and it has to be so, because a raven can't sing, and a robber can't live without robbery. Rather, I ask those who want to be egoists what they think is more egoistic, allowing you to give them laws, and respecting those given, or to practice *unruliness*, yes, complete disobedience. Good-hearted people think the laws should only prescribe what is deemed just and proper in the feeling of the people. But of what concern is it to me what is deemed valid in and by the people? The people will perhaps be against the blasphemer; thus a law against blasphemy. Should I, therefore, not blaspheme? Should this law be more to me than a "command"? I question it!

Only from the principle that all *right* and all *power* belong to the *collectivity of the people* do all governments arise. Because none of them lacks this appeal to the collectivity, and the despot as well as the president or any aristocracy, etc., acts and commands "in the name of the state." They are in possession of "state power." And it wouldn't matter at all whether, if it were possible, the people as a *collectivity* of all individuals exercise this state *power,* or only the representatives of this collectivity, be there many of them, as in aristocracies, or one, as in monarchies. Always the collectivity is above the individual, and has a power which is called *rightful*, i.e., which is right.

As opposed to the sacredness of the state, the individual is only a vessel of dishonor, in which all that is left are "exuberance, malice, compulsive mockery and disparagement, frivolity, etc.," once he doesn't find the sacred shrine, the state, worthy of acknowledgement. The spiritual *arrogance* of the servants and subjects of the state has exquisite penalties against unspiritual "exuberance."

When the government declares all mental play *against* the state punishable, then the moderate liberals come and say: whimsy, satire, wit, humor, etc., must still gush forth, and *genius* must enjoy freedom. So, indeed, not the *individual human being*, but *genius* should still be free. Completely in its right, here the state, or in its name the government, says: he who is not with me is against me. Whimsy, wit, etc., in short, making a farce of state essence has always undermined the state; it

isn't "innocent." And furthermore, what boundaries should be drawn between guilty and innocent wit, etc.? The moderates are greatly perplexed by this question, and it is all reduced to the request that the state (the government) might not be so *sensitive*, so *ticklish*; that it might not immediately sniff out malice in "harmless" things and might be generally a little "more tolerant." Exaggerated sensitivity is certainly a weakness, its avoidance may be a praiseworthy virtue; but in times of war one cannot be gentle, and what may be allowed under peaceful conditions ceases to be permitted once a state of siege is declared. Because the well-meaning liberals most likely feel this, they are quick to explain that indeed, due to "the devotion of the people," there is no danger to be feared. But the government will be wiser, and not let itself be talked into such a thing. It knows too well how people feed one fine words, and will not let itself be satisfied with these dishes for display.

But they want to have their playground, because they are children and can't settle down like an old man: boys will be boys.[212]

They bargain only for this playground, only for a few hours of merrily jumping about. They only ask the state not to be too grumpy, like a grouchy papa. It should permit some Processions of the Ass and some fools' plays, as the church allowed them in the Middle Ages. But the times when it could grant this without danger are past. Children who now come *into the open* once, and spend an hour without the rod, are not willing to be *kept cloistered*. For the open is now no longer a *supplement* to the monk's cell, not a refreshing *recreation*, but its *opposite*, an *either-or*. In short, the state must either no longer put up with anything, or put up with everything and go to ruin; it must either be utterly sensitive, or as insensitive as one who's died. Tolerance is finished. If the state just holds out a finger, they'll immediately take the whole hand. There is no more to "joke about," and all joking, like whimsy, wit, humor, etc., turns to bitter earnest.

The outcry of the "liberals" for freedom of the press runs counter to their own principle, their real *will*. They will what they *do not will*, i.e., they wish, they would like. Therefore, they also easily fall away once

212 "*Jugend hat keine Tugend,*" which literally translates "Youth has no virtue," but the rhyme makes it clear that this is a playful adage that most closely parallels in feeling the English "boys will be boys."

so-called freedom of the press appears; then they want censorship. Quite naturally. The state is also sacred to them; as is morality, etc. They merely behave like naughty brats toward it, like clever children who try to use the weaknesses of their parents. Papa State should allow them to say much that doesn't please it, but Papa has the right to put a censor's line through their impudent twaddle, with a stern look. If they recognize it as their papa, then they have to put up with the censorship of speech in its presence, like any child.

If you let another make you out in the right, you must no less let him make you out in the wrong; if justification and reward come to you from him, expect his prosecution and punishment as well. Alongside right goes wrong, alongside legality *crime*. What are *you? You are a—criminal!*

"The criminal is the state's most characteristic crime!" Bettina[213] says. One can accept these words, even if not exactly as Bettina herself understands them. In the state the unrestrained *I*, I as *I* belong to myself alone, is not capable of coming to my fulfillment and realization. Every *I* is from birth already a criminal against the people, the state. Thus, it also actually keeps watch over all; it sees in everyone an—egoist, and it is afraid of the egoist. It assumes the worst about everyone, and it pays attention, police attention, that "no harm comes to the state," *ne quid republica detrimenti capiat*.[214] The unrestrained *I*—and this we originally are, and always remain in our secret inner self—is the never-ending criminal in the state. The person who is guided by his courage, his will, his ruthlessness and fearlessness, is surrounded by spies from the state, from the people. I say, from the people! The people—you good-hearted folks consider what you have in it a wonder—the people is full of police attitude through and through. —Only the one who denies his *I*, who practices "self-denial," is agreeable to the people.

Throughout the book cited, Bettina is good-natured enough to regard the state as only sick, and to hope for its recovery, a recovery

213 ▸ Bettina von Arnim (anonymously), *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (Berlin, 1843) p. 376.

214 "In order that the state should not suffer any loss," a part of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, a declaration of public emergency passed by the Roman Senate in times of national crisis.

which she would like to bring about through the "demagogues"[215]; but it's not sick; it is rather in its full strength, when it rejects the demagogues who want to get something for individuals, for "all." In its believers, it is equipped with the best demagogues, leaders of the people. According to Bettina, the state should "develop humanity's seed of freedom; otherwise it is a raven mother[216] and provides raven fodder!"[217] It can't do anything else, because precisely as it cares for "humanity" (which, by the way, would already have to be the "humane" or "free" state), the "individual" is raven fodder for it. On the other hand, how rightly the burgomaster speaks:

> *What? Does the state have no other duty than to merely be the caretaker for the hopelessly ill?—That doesn't work. From time immemorial, the healthy state has discarded diseased material, and not mingled with it. It doesn't need to be so economical with its juices. Cut off the robber-branches without hesitation, so that the others may bloom.—You don't tremble at the state's harshness; its morality, its politics and religion, instruct it on this. You accuse it of no callousness; its sympathy resists this, but its experience finds well-being only in this severity! There are diseases in which only drastic measures help. The physician who recognizes the disease as such, but tentatively turns to palliatives, will never get rid of the disease, but will probably make the patient succumb after a shorter or longer illness.*[218]

Frau Rat's[219] question: "If you apply death as a drastic measure, how is the cure to happen?" doesn't work. The state doesn't apply death against itself, but against an irritating limb; it tears out an eye that irritates it, etc.

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215 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

216 "*Rabenmutter*" (raven mother), a term for a bad mother, because people at the time believed that a mother raven would hold back food from her infants until she saw the black on their wings.

217 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

218 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

219 Frau Rat: Goethe's mother, a reference to the title given to his father in 1742. Frau Rat is the main participant in the dialogue in *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, and expresses Bettina von Armin's perspectives.

"For the diseased state the only road to recovery is to let human beings prosper in it."[220] If, like Bettina, you here understand the human being as the concept "human being," she is right; the "diseased" state recovers through the prosperity of "human beings," because the more infatuated individuals are with "the human being," the better it is for the state. But if you refer it to individuals, to "all" (and the author also does this half and half, because she is still caught up in vagueness about "the human being"), then it sounds somewhat like the following: For a diseased band of robbers the only road to recovery is to let the loyal bourgeois flourish in it! In this way the band of robbers would simply go to ruin as a band of robbers; and since it perceives this, it therefore prefers to shoot anyone who has a leaning toward becoming a "respectable fellow."

In this book, Bettina is a patriot, or what's little more, a philanthropist, a benefactor of humankind. She is dissatisfied with the existing order in much the same way that the ghost of her book's title[221] is, along with all who would like to bring back the good, old faith and what goes with it. Only she thinks, contrarily, that the politicians, civil servants, and diplomats corrupted the state, while these same ones push the malicious, the "demagogues," into these shoes.

What else is the common criminal but one who has committed the fatal mistake of striving after what is the people's instead of seeking for what is his own? He has sought despicable *alien* goods, has done what believers do, seeking after what is God's. What does the priest who admonishes the criminal do? He sets before him the great wrong of having desecrated by his act what was made sacred by the state, its property (in which, of course, the life of those who belong to the state must be included); instead of this he could reproach him for having soiled *himself* by not *despising* the alien thing, but considering it worth stealing; he could if he weren't a priest. Talk with the so-called criminal as with an egoist, and he will be ashamed, not that he transgressed against your laws and goods, but for considering your laws worth evading and your goods worth desiring; he will be ashamed that he did not—despise your goods along with you, that

220 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 385.
221 Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia.

he was too little an egoist. But you cannot talk egoistically to him, because you are not as great as a criminal, you—commit no crimes at all! You do not know that a self-owning I cannot desist from being a criminal, that crime is his life. And yet, you should know it, since you believe that "we are altogether sinners"; but you think to finagle your way around sin, you don't understand—because you're devil-fearing—that guilt is the value of a human being. Oh, if you were guilty! But you are "righteous." Well—make everything nicely right for your lord!

When Christian consciousness or the Christian person writes a criminal code, what else can the concept of crime there be but simply—*heartlessness?* Every cutting off and offending of a *heartfelt relation*, every *heartless behavior* toward a sacred essence, is a crime. The more heartfelt the relationship should be, the more flagrant is the mocking of it, and the more culpable the crime. Everyone should love the lord to whom he is subject: to deny this love is a high treason worthy of death. Adultery is a culpable heartlessness; one has no heart, no enthusiasm, no strong feeling for the sacredness of marriage. So long as the heart or soul dictates laws, only the heartful or soulful person enjoys the protection of the law. That the soulful person makes laws actually only means that the *moral* person makes them: what is contrary to the "moral feeling" of these people, they prohibit. How should unfaithfulness, dropping away, oath-breaking, in short, all r*adical breaking off*, all tearing to pieces of time-honored *bonds*, not be unholy and criminal in their eyes? Anyone who breaks these demands of the soul has all moral, all soulful human beings as enemies. Only Krummacher and his crew are the right people to consistently set up a penal code of the heart, as a certain bill proves only too well. The consistent legislation of the Christian state must be placed wholly in the hands of the—*priests*, and will not be pure and consistent so long as it is worked out only by—*priests' servants*, who are always only *half-priests*. Only then will all soullessness, all heartlessness, be declared an unpardonable crime, only then will all agitation of the soul, every objection of criticism and doubt, be anathematized as damnable; only then is the self-owned human being, before the Christian consciousness, a convicted—*criminal* from the start.

The men of the revolution often spoke of the people's "just revenge" as its "right." Revenge and right coincide here. Is this behavior of an *I* to an *I*? The people cries that the opposing party has committed crimes against it. Can I assume that someone commits a crime against me, without presuming that he must act as I see fit? And this action, I call right, good, etc.; the deviating one a crime. Thus, I think others must go toward the same goal with me; i.e., I don't treat them as unique ones who carry their law in themselves and live by it, but as essences that should obey some "rational" law. I establish what the "human being" is and what acting in a "truly human" way means, and demand of everyone that this law become norm and ideal for him, failing which he will reveal himself as a "sinner and criminal." But the "guilty" are hit by the "penalty of the law!"

One sees here again how it is the "human being" that brings about the concepts of crime, sin, and with them that of right. A human being in whom I don't recognize "the human being" is "a sinner, a guilty person."

Only against a sacred thing are there criminals; you can never be a criminal against me, but only an opponent. But not hating someone who violates a sacred thing is already a crime, as St. Just cries out against Danton: "Are you not a criminal and answerable for having not hated the enemies of the fatherland?"[222]

If, as in the revolution, "the human being" is understood as "good citizen," then from this concept of "the human being" come the well-known "political offenses and crimes."

In all this, the individual, the individual human being, is regarded as scum, and contrarily, the universal human being, "the human being," is honored. According to how this ghost gets named, as Christian, Jew, Muslim, good citizen, loyal subject, freeman, patriot, etc., just so do those who want put forward a different concept of the human being, as well as those who want to put forward themselves, fall before the victorious "human being."

And with whose anointing the slaughter is carried out in the name of the law, of the sovereign people, of God, etc.

222 Danton, a leader of the French Revolution, opposed the Reign of Terror. This led to his arrest, trial, and execution for insufficient zeal.

Now, if the persecuted cunningly conceal and protect themselves from the stern, sanctimonious judges, people berate them as "hypocrites," as St. Just, for example, does those whom he accuses in the speech against Danton[223]. One is supposed to be a fool, and deliver himself up to their Moloch.

Crimes arise from *fixed ideas*. The sacredness of marriage is a fixed idea. From the sacredness it follows that infidelity is a *crime*, and therefore a certain marriage law imposes a shorter or longer *penalty* upon it. But for those who proclaim "freedom as sacred," this penalty must be regarded as a crime against freedom, and only in this sense has public opinion also branded the marriage law.

Indeed, society would have *everyone* come into his right, but still only to that which society sanctions, to the right of society, not really to *his* right. But *I* give or take the right for myself out of my own complete power, and against every higher power, I am the most unrepentant criminal. Owner and creator of my right, I recognize no other source of right than—me; neither God nor state nor nature nor even the human being itself with its "eternal human rights," neither divine nor human right.

Right "in and for itself." So, without relation to me! "Absolute right." So, apart from me! A thing existing in and for itself! An absolute! An eternal right, like an eternal truth!

According to the liberal way of thinking, right is to be obligatory for me, because it is set up this way by *human reason*, against which *my reason* is "unreason." People used to rail in the name of divine reason against weak human reason; now in the name of strong human reason, they rail against egoistic reason, which they reject as "unreason." And yet nothing else is actual except this very "unreason." Neither divine nor human reason, but only your and my reason at any given time, is actual, as and because you and I are actual.

The idea of right is originally my idea, or it has its origin in me. But if it has sprung out of me, when the "Word" is out, then it has "become flesh," a *fixed idea*. Now I no longer get away from the idea; whichever way I turn, it stands before me. So human beings have not

223 ▸ Adolf Rutenburg (ed.), *Bibliothek politischer Reden ause dem 18. und 19 Jahrhundert*, volume III (Berlin, 1844), p. 153.

again become masters of the idea "right," which they themselves created: the creature is running away with them. This is absolute right, that gets past or detaches from me. While we revere it as absolute, we cannot consume it again, and it deprives us of the creative power: the creation is more than the creator, it is "in and for itself."

Once you no longer let right run around freely, once you bring it back into its origin, into you, it is *your* right, and right is what is right for you.

Right has had to experience an attack from within itself, i.e., from the standpoint of right, because a war has been declared by liberalism against "privilege."

Privileged and *endowed with equal rights*—a stubborn battle revolves around these two concepts. Excluded or authorized—would mean the same thing. But where would there be a power—whether imaginary like God, law, or actual, like I, you—before which all would not be "endowed with equal rights", i.e., no respect of persons would not hold? Everyone is equally dear to God, if they adore him, equally acceptable to the law, if they are law-abiding; whether the lover of God or the law is hunchbacked or lame, whether he is rich or poor, etc., amounts to nothing for God and the law; in the same way, when you are about to drown, a Negro as a rescuer is as dear to you as the most excellent Caucasian; indeed, in this situation, a dog is no less to you than a human being. But for whom, on the contrary, wouldn't everyone also be a more preferred or a more neglected person? God punishes the wicked with his wrath, the law flogs the lawless; you'll let one speak with you at any time and show the other the door.

"Equality of rights" is just a phantom, because right is nothing more nor less than authorization, a *matter of grace*, which, by the way, you can also acquire through your merit; for merit and grace don't contradict each other, in that grace also wants to be "earned" and our gracious smile only falls on those who know how to force it from us.

So people dream that "all citizens of the state should stand side by side, with equal rights". As citizens of the state, they are certainly all equal for the state. But it will nonetheless divide them, advance them or set them aside, according to its special purposes; still more, it must distinguish them from one another as good and bad citizens.

Bruno Bauer settled the Jewish question from the standpoint that "privilege" is not justifiable. Because Jew and Christian each have some point of advantage over the other, and are each exclusive in this point of advantage, they therefore disintegrate into nullity[224] before the critic's gaze. With them the state lies under equal blame, since it justifies their having advantages and stamps it as "privilege" or prerogative, but in this way, it stunts its calling to become a "free state."

But now everyone has some point of advantage over the other, namely himself or his uniqueness; in this everyone remains exclusive.

And again, before a third party, everyone asserts his peculiarity as well as possible, and if he wants to win him over, strives to make it appear attractive to him.

Now, is the third party supposed to be insensitive to the difference of the one from the other? Does one ask this of the free state or of humanity? Then these would have to be virtually without self-interest, and incapable of expressing any concern for anyone. People didn't imagine either God, who divides his own from the wicked, or the state, which knows how to separate good from bad citizens, as so indifferent.

But people look for this very third party that no longer grants "privilege." Then perhaps it is called the free state, or humanity, or whatever else.

Since Christian and Jew are ranked low by Bruno Bauer because they claim privileges, they must be able to and have to free themselves from their narrow standpoint through self-denial and unselfishness. If they cast off their "egoism," the mutual wrong would cease and with it Christian and Jewish religiousness in general; it would only require that neither of them would any longer want to be something distinctive.

But if they gave up this exclusiveness, the ground on which their hostilities were truly waged would still not be left behind through this. At best, they would find a third thing in which they could unite, a "universal religion," a "religion of humanity," etc.; in short, an

224 "*Nichtigkeit*" in the singular form is most often used as a legal or judicial term expressing legal invalidity or nullity, for example of a verdict, a contract, an election, etc. Since this usage seems appropriate to this context, I chose to translate it as nullity, which fits that context, but also implies nothingness.

equalization that needn't be any better than that which would take place if all Jews became Christians, through which likewise the "privilege" of the one before the other would come to an end. Indeed, the *tension* would be removed, but the essence of the two did not consist in this, but rather only their proximity. When they are distinguished from each other, they must necessarily tense up and the dissimilarity will always remain. It is truly not a defect in you that you tense yourself against me and assert your distinctness or peculiarity: you don't need to give way or deny yourself.

People understand the significance of the conflicts too *formally* and weakly if they only want to "dissolve" them in order to make room for a "unifying" third thing. The conflict deserves rather to be *intensified*. As Jew and Christian you are in too slight a conflict and are only arguing about religion, about the emperor's beard as it were, about a trifle. In religion, indeed, enemies, but *in everything else* you remain good friends, and, for example, as human beings, are equal to each other. Nevertheless, everything else is also unlike in each; and you will only come to no longer *conceal* your conflict when you fully recognize it, and everyone asserts himself from head to toe as *unique*. Then the earlier conflict will certainly be dissolved, but only because a stronger one has taken it up into itself.

Our weakness does not consist in this, that we are in conflict with others, but rather in this, that we are not fully so, i.e., that we are not entirely *divorced* from them, or that we are looking for "community," a "bond," that in community we have an ideal. One Faith, One God, One Ideal, One Hat for all! If all were brought under one hat, certainly no one would still have to remove his hat before another.

The last and most resolute conflict, that of unique against unique, is at bottom beyond what is called conflict, but without having sunk back into "unity" and consensus. As unique, you no longer have anything in common with the other and therefore also nothing divisive or hostile; you don't seek to be in the right against him before a *third* party, and stand with him neither "on the ground of right," nor any other common ground. The conflict disappears in complete—*divergence* or uniqueness. This could indeed be considered the new common feature or parity, only the parity here consists precisely of the

disparity, and is itself nothing but disparity, being on par in disparity, and that only for one who makes a "comparison."[225]

The polemic against privilege is a trait of liberalism, which knocks "privilege," because it itself appeals to "right." It can't take this further than knocking it; because privileges do not fall before rights fall, as they are only forms of right. But right disintegrates into its nothingness when it is devoured by the form, i.e., when one realizes what this means: "power goes before right." So all right is explained as privilege, and privilege itself as power, as—*superior power*.[226]

But doesn't the battle of the powerful against a superior power have to show quite a different face from the modest battle against privilege, which is to be fought out before a primary judge, "right," according to the judge's sense?

Now, to conclude, I must still take back the halfway mode of expression which I wanted to use only so long as I was still digging through the entrails of right, and at least let the word pass. But, in fact, with the concept, the word also loses its meaning. What I called "my right" is no longer a right at all, because right can only be granted by a spirit, whether it is the spirit of nature or that of the species, of humanity, the spirit of God, or that of his sacredness or his highness, etc. What I have without an authorizing spirit, I have without right; I have it solely and alone through my *power*.

I demand no right, so I also don't need to recognize any. What I am able to get by force I get by force, and I have no right to what I don't get by force, and I don't boast of or console myself with my inalienable rights.

With absolute right, right itself dies; the rule of the "concept of right" is wiped out at the same time. For it is not to be forgotten that up to now concepts, ideas, or principles have ruled us, and that

225 In this sentence, Stirner makes a word-play on the syllable "*gleich*" running through several words. To imitate this, I chose to use the words with the syllable "par." In this way I could extend the wordplay as far as he had in the German.

226 Stirner may have been making a pun here in that "*Übermacht*" (superior power) is clearly related to the verb "*übermachen*" which translates as "to bequeath," and the "superior power" of privilege is often a matter of inheritance, due to be being born into the right family.

among these rulers, the concept of right, or of justice, played one of the most important roles.

Authorized or unauthorized—it doesn't matter to me; if only I am powerful, then I am empowered by myself, and need no other authorization or permission.

Right—is a bat in the belfry, placed there be a phantasm; power—that I am myself, I am the powerful one and the owner of power. Right is above me, an absolute, and exists in a higher being, flowing to me as its grace: right is a gift of grace from the judge; power and force exist only in me, the powerful and the forceful.

2.2.2 My Intercourse

In society, in the social group, at most the human requirement can be satisfied, while the egoistic must always come up short.

Because it can hardly escape anyone that the present shows such a living interest for no other question as for the "social" question, so a person has to direct his attention particularly upon society. Indeed, if the interest taken in it were less passionate and blind, then when dealing with society, people would not so often lose sight of the individuals in it, and would recognize that a society cannot become new so long as those who form and constitute it remain old. If there should arise, for example, in the Jewish people a society that spread a new faith over the earth, these apostles would really have to not remain Pharisees.

As you are, so you present yourself, so you behave toward people: a hypocrite as a hypocrite, a Christian as a Christian. Therefore, the character of a society is determined by the character of its members: they are its creators. You would have to recognize this much at least even if you did not want to examine the concept "society" itself.

Always far from letting *themselves* come to their full development and value, human beings have not yet been able to base their societies on *themselves;* or rather, they have only been able to found "societies" and to live in societies. These societies were always persons, powerful persons, so-called moral persons, i.e., ghosts, before which the individual had the appropriate bat in his belfry, the fear of ghosts. As such ghosts, they can most properly be called by the respective names

"people"[227] and "tribe"[228]: the people of the patriarchs, the people of the Hellenes, etc., finally, the human people, humanity (Anacharsis Cloots raved about the "nation" of humanity), then every subdivision of this "people," which could and must have its particular societies, the Spanish, the French people, etc.; within these as well, the estates, the cities, in short all kinds of corporations; last, at the extreme point the small tribe of the—*family*. Instead of saying that the Person haunting all societies up to now has been the people, hence also the two extremes could be named, namely either "humanity" or the "family," the two "most natural units." We choose the word "people" because its origin has been brought together with the Greek *polloi*, the "many" or the "mass," but more so because "national aspirations" are at present the order of the day, and also because even the latest rebel has not yet shaken off this deceptive person, although, on the other hand, the latter consideration would have to give the advantage to the term "humanity," because on all sides people are starting to rave over "humanity."

So the people—humanity or the family—have up to now, as it seems, played at history: no *egoistic* interest was supposed to arise in these societies, but only universal, national or popular interests, class interests, family interests, and "universal human interests." But who has brought the peoples, whose ruin history relates, to their downfall? Who else but the egoist, who sought *his own* satisfaction! Once an egoistic interest crept in, the society was "spoiled" and headed towards its disintegration, as, for example, the Roman world proves with its highly developed system of private rights, or Christianity with the inexorably gushing "rational self-determination," "self-consciousness," the "autonomy of the spirit," etc.

The Christian people have produced two societies, whose duration will keep equal measure with the continuing existence of those people; these are the societies: *state* and *church*. Can they be called a union of egoists? Do we pursue in them an egoistic, personal, own interest, or do we pursue a popular (traditional, i.e., in the Christian *people),* namely a state and church interest? Can and may I be myself in them? May I think and act as I will, may I reveal, realize, act as

227 "*Volk.*"
228 "*Völkchen.*"

myself? Aren't I supposed to leave the majesty of the state, the sanctity of the church, untouched?

Well, I am not permitted to do as I will. But will I find in any society such an unmeasured freedom of permissions? Of course not! Consequently, we could maybe be satisfied? Not at all! It is a different thing whether I bounce off an *I* or off a people, a universal. In the former I am the evenly matched enemy of my enemy, in the latter a despised, controlled enemy, treated like a child; in the former I stand man against man, in the latter I'm a schoolboy who can't do anything against his schoolmate, because the latter called his father and mother to help and hid under the apron, while I am scolded as a naughty boy, and am not permitted to "grumble"; in the former I fight against a bodily enemy, in the latter against humanity, against a universal, against a "majesty," against a phantasm. But to me, no majesty, nothing sacred, is a limit, nothing that I know how to overcome. Only that which I can't overcome still limits my power, and I of limited power am temporarily a limited *I*, not limited by the power *outside* me, but limited by my *own* still inadequate power, by my *own powerlessness*. Only, "the guard dies, but doesn't surrender!" Above all, only a bodily enemy!

> *I brave each combatant,*
> *Whom I can look on, fixing eye to eye,*
> *Who, full himself of courage, kindles courage*
> ***In me too.—etc.***[229]

Many privileges have indeed been destroyed over time, but only for the sake of the common good, of the state and the state's welfare, by no means for the strengthening of mine. Hereditary serfdom, for example, was abolished only so that a single lord of the manor, the lord of the people, the monarchical power, would be strengthened; serfdom under the one became even stricter thereby. Only in favor of the monarch, whether he is called "prince" or "law," have privileges ever fallen. In France, the citizens are indeed not the serfs of the king, but rather the serfs of the "law" (the Charter). Subordination was

229 Friedrich Schiller, *The Death of Wallenstein*, Act I, Scene 4.

maintained, only the Christian state recognized that a person cannot serve two masters (the landlords and the princes, etc.); therefore, one received all the privileges; now he can again *place* one above another, he can make "highly placed" people.

But what do I care for the common good? The common good is not my good, but merely outermost extremity of *self-denial*. The common good can loudly cheer while I must "knuckle under"; the state gleaming, while I starve. In what lies the stupidity of political liberals, if not in their opposing the people to the government and talking about people's rights? So there the people should come of age, etc. As if one who has no mouth[230] could be of age[231]! Only the individual is able to be of age. Thus, the whole question of freedom of the press is turned on its head when it is taken up as a "people's right." It is only a right, or better the power, of *individuals*. If a people has freedom of the press, then, even in the midst of this people, *I* do not; a freedom of the people is not *my* freedom, and freedom of the press as a freedom of the people must have at its side a press law directed against *me*.

This must ever be asserted against the present-day efforts for freedom:

Freedom of *the people* is not *my* freedom!

Let's allow these categories: freedom of the people and right of the people: for example, the right of the people that everyone may bear arms. Doesn't one forfeit such a right? One cannot forfeit one's own right, but I may well forfeit a right that that does not belong to me but to the people. I can be locked up for the sake of the freedom of the people, and as prisoner lose the right to bear arms.

Liberalism appears to be the last attempt of the creation of the freedom of the people, a freedom of the community, of "society," of the universal, of humanity, the dream of a humanity, a people, a community, a "society," that has come of age.

A people cannot be free except at the expense of the individual; because the individual is not the main point of this freedom, but rather the people. The freer the people, the more bound the individual; the

230 "*Mund.*"
231 "*Mundig.*"

people of Athens, precisely at its freest time, created ostracism, banished atheists, poisoned the most honest thinker.

How they do praise Socrates for his conscientiousness, which allows him to resist the advice to escape from the dungeon! He is a fool for granting the Athenians the right to condemn him. That's why it certainly serves him right; so why does he remain on the same ground with the Athenians? Why doesn't he break with them? Had he known, and been able to know, what he was, he would have granted such judges no claim, no right. That *he did not escape* was precisely his weakness, his delusion of still having something in common with the Athenians, or the opinion that he was a member, a mere member of this people. But he was rather this people itself in person and could only be his own judge. There was no *judge over him*, as he himself had passed a public sentence on himself and judged himself worthy of the Prytaneum.[232] He should have stuck with this, and since he hadn't uttered a death sentence against himself, should have despised that of the Athenians and escaped. But he subordinated himself and recognized the *people* as his *judge;* he seemed small to himself before the majesty of the people. That he subjected himself to *power,* to which he could only lose, as to a "right," was self-betrayal: it was *virtue.* The narrators ascribe the same scrupulousness to Christ, who supposedly abstained from using the power over his heavenly legions. Luther acted very well and wisely in having the safety of his journey to Worms guaranteed to him in writing, and Socrates should have known that the Athenians were his *enemies,* he alone his judge. The self-deception of a "legal position, laws," etc., should have given way to the understanding that the relation was a relation of *power.*

With quibbling and intrigues Greek freedom ended. Why? Because the ordinary Greeks were much less able to reach the conclusion which even their hero of thought, Socrates, wasn't able to draw. What then is quibbling but a way of using an existing thing without doing away with it? I might add "for one's own benefit," but indeed that lies in "using." Theologians are such quibblers, "wrangling and

232 The Prytaneum was the chief public building of the capital city of every Greek state. It contained the offices of the chief functionaries and was the place where ambassadors were entertained. In addition, distinguished citizens would be rewarded there with the provision of meals at state expense, usually for life.

twisting" God's word; what would they have to twist if there wasn't the "existing" word of God? So those liberals who only rattle and twist the "existing order." They are all distorters, like those distorters of the law. Socrates recognized right, law; the Greeks constantly maintained the authority of right and law. If, in this recognition, they still wanted to maintain their advantage, each his own, then they had to seek it in the distortion of the law, or intrigue. Alcibiades,[233] a brilliant intriguer, introduces the period of Athenian "decay"; the Spartan Lysander[234] and others show that intrigue became universally Greek. Greek *rights,* on which the Greek *state* rested, had to be distorted and undermined by the egoists within these states, and the *states* perished so that the *individuals* could become free, the Greek people fell because individuals cared less for this people than for themselves. Actually all states, constitutions, churches, etc., have gone under through the *escape*[235] of individuals; because the individual is the irreconcilable enemy of every *universality,* every *tie,* i.e., every fetter. Yet people imagine to this day that the human being needs "sacred ties," he, the mortal enemy of every "tie." World history shows that no tie has yet been left unbroken, that the human being defends himself tirelessly against ties of every sort; and yet blinded people think up new ties again and again, and believe that they have achieved the right one, for example, when they put on the tie of a so-called free constitution, a beautiful, constitutional tie: true enough, school ties,[236] the ties of trust between "– –," seem to have gotten practically rather worn out, but people have gone no further than from apron strings to belts and neckties.

Everything sacred is a tie, a fetter.

233 Athenian general and statesman.

234 Spartan general and statesman.

235 It is interesting that the word "*Austritt*" can also mean "emergence" under certain circumstances. If Stirner is playing on this double meaning, then the implication would be that state, constitutions, churches, etc., go under when individuals escape these institutions by emerging as *their own* selves.

236 "*Ordensbänder*" literally refers to ribboned medals, like those one might get in the military, but he is making a play on the word "*Band*" or tie, and a literal translation loses that connection. So I decided to make a reference to the "school ties" of the British upper class, neckties that represent the school they went to as a child which are considered as a sign of a supposed obligation they owe each other for having been schoolmates.

Everything sacred is and must be distorted by the distorters of the law; therefore our present time has loads of such distorters in every sphere. They're preparing for the violation of the law, for lawlessness.

Poor Athenians, who are accused of quibbling and sophistry; poor Alcibiades, who is accused of intrique. That was just your best point, your first step in freedom. Your Aeschylus,[237] Herodotus,[238] etc., only wanted to have a free Greek *people*; you were the first to hint at *your* freedom.

A people suppresses those who tower up above *its majesty*, by ostracism against the powerful citizens, by the Inquisition against the heretics of the church, by the—inquisition against traitors in the state.

Because all that matters to the people is its self-assertion; it demands "patriotic sacrifice" from everyone. Consequently, for it everyone *in himself* is indifferent, a nothing, and it cannot do, nor even allow, what the individual and he alone must do—namely, *realize himself*. Every people, every state is injurious to the individual.

As long as even one institution exists which the individual may not dismantle, my ownness and self-possession are still very far away. How can I be free when I must bind myself under oath to a constitution, a charter, a law, "devote myself body and soul" to my people? How can I be my own when my abilities are only allowed to develop so far as they "do not disturb the harmony of society" (Weitling)?

The downfall of peoples and humanity will invite *me* to my rise.

Listen, even as I write this, the bells begin to ring for tomorrow, jingling in the celebration of the thousand years of existence of our dear Germany. Ring out, ring out its funeral dirge! You certainly sound solemn enough, as if your tongue were acting on the suspicion that it was escorting a corpse. The German nation and German peoples have a thousand-year history behind them: what a long life! Then go rest in peace, never to rise again, so that all will be free whom you have kept in chains so long.—The *people* is dead.—Long live *me!*[239]

Oh, you, my much-tormented German people—what was your torment? It was the torture of a thought which can't create a body for itself, the torment of a haunted spirit that melts away into nothing

237 Author of Greek tragedies.

238 Ancient Greek historian.

239 Literally, "*Wohlauf **Ich!***", approximately "**I'm** quite well!" or "Good health to **me!**", but in context, "Long live **me!**" seems appropriate.

before every cock-crow and yet yearns for deliverance and fulfillment. You have also lived in me a long time, you dear—thought, you dear—phantasm. I almost imagined I had found the word of your deliverance, discovered flesh and bone for the wandering spirit; then I hear them ringing, the bells that lay you to eternal rest, then the last hope fades away, then the last love fizzles out, then I depart from the desolate house of the dead and call in on the living:

For only one who is living is right.

Farewell, you dream of so many millions, farewell, you thousand-year tyrant over your children!

Tomorrow they carry you to your grave; soon your sisters, the peoples, will follow you. But when they have all followed, then—humanity is buried, and I am my own, I am the laughing heir!

The word "*Gesellschaft*" (society) has its origins in the word "*Sal*" (hall, room).[240] If many people are shut up in a room, the room causes them to be in society. They *are* in society and at most form a salon society, to speak in traditional salon clichés. When it comes to actual intercourse, this is to be regarded as independent of society; it may arise or be absent without altering the nature of what is called society. Those who are in the room are in society even as mute persons, or when they put each other off with mere words of courtesy. Intercourse is mutuality, it is the action, the *commercium*[241] of individuals; society is only the commonality of the room, and even the statues in a museum room are in society, they are grouped. People customarily say: "they hold the room in common," but it's rather the case that the room holds us or has us in it. That's as far as the natural meaning of the word society goes. It comes out from this that society is not generated by me and you, but by a third factor which makes us both into associates, and that it is precisely this third factor that is the

240 Because this etymology only applies to the German words and not to their English equivalents, I think it makes more sense to leave the German words in the text with their English equivalent in parentheses beside them. "*Sal*" appears to be an older version of the word "*Saal*" or "*Säle*."

241 Latin for "communication."

creative thing,[242] the thing that establishes[243] society.

It's very like a prison society or prison collective[244] (those who enjoy[245] the same prison). Here we get into a third factor even richer than the merely local one, the room, was. Prison no longer just means a space, but a space with express reference to its residents: it is indeed only a prison because it is intended for prisoners, without whom it would be a mere building. What gives a common stamp to the collectivity in it? Obviously, the prison, since they are prisoners only by means of the prison. So what determines the *way of life* of prison society? The prison! What determines their intercourse? Perhaps also the prison? Of course, they can only carry on intercourse as prisoners, i.e., only as far as prison laws allow it; but that *they themselves* hold intercourse, I with you, this the prison cannot bring about; on the contrary, it must take care to prevent such egoistic, purely personal intercourse (and only as such is it actual intercourse between you and me). That we collectively perform a task, operate a machine, set something in motion, a prison will provide well for this; but that I forget that I am a prisoner, and enter into intercourse with you who equally disregard it, that puts the prison at risk, and not only cannot be brought about by it, but furthermore must not be permitted. For this reason, the saintly and morally-minded French chamber decides to introduce solitary confinement, and other saints will do the same in order to cut off "demoralizing intercourse." Imprisonment is the established and—sacred condition against which no attempt to injure is allowed. The slightest challenge of this sort is punishable, like any rebellion against a sacred thing by which the human being is supposed to be inhibited and imprisoned.

Like the room, the prison forms a society, a collective, a community (e.g., a community of labor), but no *intercourse*, no mutuality, no *association*. On the contrary, every association in prison carries

242 "*Erschaffende.*"

243 "*Schaffende.*"

244 "*Genossenschaft*": This word can also translate as "cooperative" or "companionship." I considered using "collectivity" here to emphasize the involuntary nature of this association, precisely the analogy Stirner seems to be making with society as a whole, but there is another word that specifically translates as "collectivity" which Stirner uses later, and I wouldn't be surprised that Stirner had specific intentions with his use here.

245 "*Geniessen.*"

within itself the dangerous seed of a "plot," which could, under favorable circumstances, sprout and bear fruit.

But one doesn't usually enter the prison voluntarily, and seldom voluntarily remains in it, but rather nurtures the egoistic desire for liberty. Thus, it's more easily understood here that personal intercourse acts with hostility against prison society and tends towards the dissolution of this society, this common imprisonment.

So let's look around for communities of the sort that we, as it seems, gladly and voluntarily remain in, without wanting to endanger them by our egoistic desires.

The *family* presents itself as a community of the required sort at first. Parents, spouses, children, siblings, present a whole or make up a family, for whose further extension side relatives may also serve if drawn close. The family is only an actual community when the law of the family, family piety or family love, is observed by its members. A son to whom parents and siblings have become indifferent *used to be* a son; because, since the sonship shows itself to be no longer operative, it has no greater significance than the long-past connection of mother and child through the umbilical cord. That one once lived in this bodily connection is a done thing that cannot be undone, and to this extent one remains the son of this mother and the brother of her other children; but it would only come to a lasting connection through lasting family piety, this family spirit. Individuals are only members of the family in the full sense when they make the *survival* of the family their task; only as *conservatives* do they keep away from doubting their basis, the family. One thing must be firm and sacred for every family member, namely the family itself, or, more eloquently, family piety. That the family must *survive* remains an unassailable truth for its member, so long as he remains free from egoism that is hostile to the family. In a word: If the family is sacred, then nobody who belongs to it can renounce it; otherwise, he becomes a "criminal" against the family; he should never pursue an interest hostile to the family, e.g., enter into a misalliance.[246] One who does this has "dishonored the family," "brought it to shame," etc.

246 Due to the context, dealing with the family, I suspect that "*Mißheirat*" most likely means either a marriage not acceptable to the family or a sexual relationship without the sanction of marriage.

Now, if the egoistic desire in an individual doesn't have enough force, then he submits and enters into a marriage which suits family requirements, takes a profession which harmonizes with its position, and the like; in short, he "does the family honor."

However, if the egoistic blood flows with enough fire through his veins, he prefers to become a "criminal" against the family and evade its laws.

Which of the two is closer to my heart, the welfare of the family or my own welfare? In many cases the two go peacefully together, and the benefit of the family is equally mine and *vice versa*. Then it can be hard to decide whether I am thinking *selfishly* or *for the general benefit,* and perhaps, well-pleased, I flatter myself with my unselfishness. But a day comes when an either-or decision makes me tremble, when I have it in mind to dishonor the family tree, to offend parents, siblings, relatives. What then? Now it will appear how I am inclined at the bottom of my heart; now it will be obvious whether family piety ever stood higher than egoism for me; now the self-interested one will no longer be able to hide behind the appearance of unselfishness. A wish rises in my soul, and growing from hour to hour, becomes a passion. Who thinks immediately, that even the least thought that may leak out against the family spirit, family piety, carries within it an offense against this, indeed—who then is immediately, in the moment, fully aware of the thing? That's how it goes for Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. The unbridled passion can finally no longer be tamed, and it undermines the edifice of family piety. Of course, you will say, from self-will the family casts out from its bosom those stubborn ones, who give more of a hearing to their passions than to family piety; the good Protestants used the same excuse against the Catholics with much success, and even believed in it. But it's just an excuse to shift the blame from oneself and nothing more. The Catholics adhered to the common church bond, and thrust those heretics from themselves, only because the latter didn't hold so much to the church bond as to sacrifice their convictions to it; the former held so firmly to the bond, because the bond, the Catholic, that is, the common and united church, was sacred to them; the latter, on the other hand, disregarded the bond. Similarly for those without family piety. They are not

expelled, but expel themselves, because they hold their passion, their self-will, in higher regard than the family bond.

Now, however, a wish sometimes glimmers in a less passionate and willful heart than Juliet's. The compliant girl brings herself as a *sacrifice* to the peace of the family. One could say self-interest also prevails here, because the decision comes from the feeling that the compliant girl feels more satisfied by family unity than by the fulfillment of her wish. That might be; but how, when a sure sign remains that the egoism was sacrificed to family piety? How, when even after the wish that was directed against the peace of the family was sacrificed, it remained at least in the remembrance of a "sacrifice" brought to a sacred tie? How, when the compliant girl is aware of having left her self-will unsatisfied and humbly subjected herself to a higher power? Subjected and sacrificed, because the superstition of family piety exercised its dominance over her!

In the former egoism wins, in the latter family piety wins and the egoistic heart bleeds; in the former egoism was strong, in the latter it was—weak. But the weak, as we have long known, are the —unselfish. The family cares for them, for these its weak members, because they *belong* to the family, are relatives,[247] don't belong to and care for themselves. Hegel, for example, praises this weakness when he wants to know that the choice is left to the parents in the marriage-games of their children.

As a sacred community to which the individual also owes obedience, the judicial function also belongs to the family, as such a family court is described in *Cabanis* by Willibald Alexis.[248] There the father, in the name of the "family council," puts the insubordinate son among the soldiers and thrusts him out of the family, in order to cleanse the stained family by means of this punishing act. —The most consistent formation of family responsibility is contained in Chinese law, according to which the whole family must atone for the guilt of the individual.

Today, however, the arm of family power rarely extends far enough

247 Here there is a wordplay that doesn't translate into English. "Belong" in German is "*angehören.*" The word Stirner uses for "relative" here is "*Familienangehörige,*" literally, "family belonging."

248 A patriotic novel published in 1832, set in the reign of Frederick II in Prussia.

to seriously carry out the punishment of renegades (in most cases, the state even protects against disinheritance). The criminal against the family (the family-criminal) flees into the realm of the state and is free, like the state-criminal who escapes to America and is no longer reached by the punishments of his state. He who has disgraced his family, the wayward son, is protected from the family's punishment, because the state, this protector, deprives the family punishment of its "sacredness" and profanes it by decreeing that it was only—"revenge": it prevents this punishment, this sacred family right, because before its, the state's, "sacredness," the subordinate sacredness of the family always pales and is profaned, as soon as it comes into conflict with this higher sacredness. Without conflict, the state leaves the lesser sacredness of the family in force; but in the opposite case, it even commands crime against the family, charging the son, for example, to refuse obedience as soon as they want to seduce him to a crime against the state.

Now, the egoist has broken the ties of the family and found in the state a patron against the deeply offended family spirit. But where has he gotten to now? Straight into a new *society*, in which the same snares and traps that his egoism just escaped await it. For the state is also a society, not an association; it is the extended *family* ("father of his country—mother of her country—children of their country").

What one calls a state is a web and network of dependence and devotion; it is a *togetherness*, a sticking together, in which those ordered together acquiesce to each other, or in short, depend on each other: it is the *order* of this *dependence*. Suppose the king, whose authority lends authority to all down to the bailiff, disappeared; still, all in whom the sense of order was awake would maintain order against the disorder of bestiality. If disorder triumphed, the state would come to an end.

But is this thought of love, acquiescing to each other, sticking with each other, and depending on each other, actually able to win us? According to this, the state would be *love* realized, the being for each other and living for each other of all. Doesn't self-will get lost due to this sense of order? Won't people be content when power provides for order, i.e., makes sure that no one "treads too close" to another;

thus, when the *herd* is sensibly deployed or ordered? Indeed, then everything is in "the best order," and this best order is simply called—the state!

Our societies and states *are* without our *making* them, are combined without our combining, are predestined and exist, or have an independent existence of their own; are the imperishable established order against us egoists. Today's global battle is, as they say, directed against the "established order." Still people are in the habit of misunderstanding this, as if the present established order should only be exchanged for another, better established order. But war might rather be declared against the established order itself, i.e., the *state* (*status*), not a particular state, nor, for instance, only the current condition of the state; people aren't aiming for another state (say, a "people's state"), but at their *association,* their combination, this ever-fluid combination of all that exists.—A state exists even without my assistance: I am born and raised in it, placed under an obligation to it, and have to "pay homage"[249] to it. It takes me up into its "favor,"[250] and I live by its "grace." So the independent existence of the state establishes my lack of independence; its "naturalness," its organism, demands that my nature doesn't grow freely, but is cut to fit it. So that *it* can develop naturally, it applies the shears of "civilization" to me; it gives me an education and culture suitable to it, not me, and teaches me, for example, to respect the law, to abstain from the violation of state property (i.e., private property), to revere a divine and earthly sovereignty, etc.; in short, it teaches me to—*not be culpable*, by which I mean to "sacrifice" my ownness to "sacredness" (everything possible is sacred; for example, property, the lives of others, etc.). This is the sort of civilization and culture the state is able to give me; it teaches me to be a "useful tool," a "useful member of society."

Every state must do this, the people's state as well as the absolute or constitutional states. It must do this so long as we remain stuck in the error that it is an *I*, which it attributes to itself in the name of a "moral, mystical, or state person." I, who really am *I*, must pull off this lion-skin of the *I* from the strutting thistle-eater. What manifold

249 "*huldigen.*"
250 "*Huld.*"

robbery have I not put up with in the history of the world! There I allowed sun, moon and stars, cats and crocodiles, to have the honor of being considered as *I*; then Jehovah, Allah, and Our Father came and they were presented with the *I*; then families, tribes, nations, and finally even humanity came and were honored as *I*s; then the state, the church came with the pretension of being *I*, and I watched it all quietly. No wonder if then there was also always an actual *I* that stepped up there and asserted to my face that it was not my *you* but my own *I*. *The* Son of Man had done the same *par excellence*; why shouldn't *a* son of man do it too? So I always looked for my *I* above and outside myself and could never actually come to myself.

I never believed in me, I never believed in my present, I saw myself only in the future. The boy believes that he'll only become a proper *I*, a proper guy, when he becomes a man; the man thinks that only in the afterlife will he be something proper. And for us to come nearer to actuality immediately, even the best are still today telling each other the tale that one has to take up into himself the state, his people, humanity, and who knows what all, in order to be an actual *I*, a "free, state citizen," a "free or true man"; they also see my truth and actuality in the acceptance of an alien *I* and devotion to it. And what sort of an *I*? An *I* that is neither an *I* nor a *you*, an *imaginary I*, a phantasm.

During the Middle Ages the church could well tolerate many states living united in it; likewise, after the Reformation, and especially after the Thirty Years' War, states learned to tolerate many churches (denominations) being gathered under one crown. But all states are religious and, as the case may be, are often "Christian states," and set themselves the task of forcing the ungovernable, the "egoists," under the bond of the unnatural, i.e., to Christianize them. All institutions of the Christian state have the objective of *Christianizing the people.* Thus, the court has the objective of forcing people to justice, the school that of forcing them to spiritual culture; in short, the objective of protecting those who act in a Christian manner from those who act in an unchristian manner, of bringing Christian action to *dominance*, of making it *powerful.* Among these means of coercion, the state also counted the *church*, it required a—particular religion from

everybody. Dupin[251] recently said against the clergy: "Instruction and education belong to the state."

Certainly, all that concerns the principle of morality is a state matter. Thus, the Chinese state meddles so much in family affairs, and one is nothing, if one is not, above all, a good child to his parents. With us as well, family affairs are thoroughly state affairs; it's just that our state—places trust in the families without anxious supervision; it keeps the family bound through the ties of marriage, and these ties cannot be broken without it.

But that the state makes me responsible for my principles, and demands certain ones from me, could lead me to ask: What does the "bat in my belfry" (principle) have to do with it? Very much, because the state is the—*ruling principle.* People suppose that in matters of divorce, in marriage law in general, it's a question of the proportion of rights between church and state. Rather it's a question of whether something sacred should rule over human beings, whether it is called faith or moral law (morality). The state, as a ruler, behaves the same way the church did. The latter is based on devoutness, the former on morality.

People talk of tolerance, of leaving opposing tendencies free, and the like, traits by which civilized states are distinguished. Indeed, some are strong enough to sit back and watch even the most unconstrained meetings, while others charge their minions to hunt down tobacco pipes. Only for one state as for the other, the play of individuals with each other, their buzzing back and forth, their everyday life, is a *contingency*, that it must no doubt leave to the individuals themselves because it can do nothing about them. Many, admittedly, still strain at gnats and swallow camels,[252] while others are more clever. In the latter, individuals are "freer," because they're less bullied. But *I* am free in *no* state. The state's lauded tolerance is simply a tolerance of the "inoffensive," the "innocuous"; it is only an elevation above small-mindedness, only a more respectable, more magnificent, prouder—despotism. For a time, a certain state seemed to want to be

251 A French lawyer, magistrate, and political leader, involved in the 1830 revolution in France, who later became more conservative.

252 Matthew 23:24.

quite elevated above *literary* battles, which could be carried on with all heat; England is elevated above the *popular mob* and—tobacco smoking. But woe to the literature that attacks the state itself, woe to the mobs that "endanger" the state. In that certain state they dream of a "free science"; in England of a "free life of the people."

Undoubtedly, the state lets individuals *play* as freely as possible, only they must not act in *earnest,* they must not forget *the state.* The person must not interact *in a carefree way* with other people, not without "higher supervision and mediation." I must not do all that I am capable of doing, but only as much as the state allows; I must not make use of *my own* thoughts, nor *my own* work, nor, in general, anything of mine.

The state always has the sole purpose of limiting, taming, subordinating the individual—of making him subservient to some universality or other; it lasts only so long as individuals are not all in all, and is only the clearly marked *limitation of me,* my restriction, my slavery. Thus, the state has never aimed to bring about the free activity of individuals, but always that bound to the *state purpose.* Nor, through the state, does anything *in common* come to be, as little as you can call a fabric the common work of all the individual parts of a machine; it is rather the work of the whole machine as a unit, *machine work.* In the same way too, everything is done by the *state machine*; because it moves the cogs of the individual minds, none of which follow their own impulses. The state seeks to inhibit all free activity through its censorship, its supervision, its police, and considers this inhibition its duty, because in reality it is the duty of self-preservation. The state wants to make something out of human beings, and so only *made* human beings live in it; everyone who wants to be himself is its enemy and is nothing. "He is nothing" means as much as: the state doesn't use him, doesn't grant him any position, office, trade, and the like.

Edgar Bauer still dreams in *Die liberalen Bestrebungen*[253] of a "government which, arising from the people, could never stand in opposition to it."[254] It's true, he himself takes back the word "government":

253 ▸ What was said in the concluding remarks after "humane liberalism" holds good of the following—namely, that it was also written immediately after the appearance of the book cited.

254 ▸ Edgar Bauer, *Die liberalen Bestrebungen in Deutschland* [Liberal Endeavors in

> *In the republic no government at all is in force, but rather only an executive authority. An authority that arises purely and solely from the people, which has no independent power, no independent principles, no independent officials over against the people, but which rather has its basis, the source of its power and its principles, in the sole, supreme authority of the state, the people. The concept of government does not at all fit into the people's state.*[255]

But the thing remains the same. That which "arose, was based, had its source" becomes something "independent" and, like a child delivered from the womb, immediately enters into opposition. Government, if it were nothing independent and opposing, would be nothing at all.

"In the free state there is no government, etc."[256] This actually implies that the people, when it is the *sovereign*, doesn't let itself be led by a higher authority. Is it somehow different in the absolute monarchy? Is there perhaps a government there for the *sovereign,* standing over him? *Over* the sovereign, whether he is called prince or people, there is never a government standing, that is understood in itself. But there will be a government standing over *me* in every "state," in the absolute as well as in the republican or "free." *I* am as bad off in one as in the other.

The republic is nothing else but—absolute monarchy: because it makes no difference whether the monarch is called prince or people, since both are a "majesty." Constitutionalism itself shows that no one is willing and able to be only a tool. The ministers dominate over their master the prince, and the representatives dominate over their master the people. Well, here at least the *parties* are already free, namely, the party of officials (the so-called people's party). The prince must submit to the will of the ministers, the people must dance to the pipe of the chambers. Constitutionalism is further along than the republic, because it is the *state* in the process of *disintegration*.

Germany] (Zurich and Winterhur, 1843), No. 2, p. 50.

255 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

256 ▸ *bid.*, p. 94.

Edgar Bauer denies[257] that the people is a "personality" in the constitutional state; by contrast, then, to the republic? Well, in a constitutional state the people is—a *party*, and a party is surely a "personality," once one wants to talk of a "state"[258] as a moral person at all. The thing is that a moral person, whether it is called a people's party, or the people, or even "the Lord," is in no way a person, but a phantasm.

Furthermore, Edgar Bauer goes on: "Paternalism[259] is the characteristic of government."[260] Indeed, it's even more that of a people and a "people's government"; it is the characteristic of all *rule*. A people's state, which "unites all absolute power within itself," the "absolute master," can't let me become powerful. And what a chimera, to no longer be willing to call the "people's officials" "servants, tools," because they "carry out the free, rational law-will of the people"![261] He says: "Only when all official circles subordinate themselves to the government's views can unity be brought to the state";[262] but his people's state is also supposed to have unity; how would the lack of subordination be allowed there? Subordination to the—people's will.

"In the constitutional state it is the ruler and his *basic attitude* that the whole government structure rests on in the end."[263] How would that be different in the "people's state"? Wouldn't *I* be governed there by the people's *basic attitude*, and does it make any difference *for me*, whether I see myself kept in dependence by the prince's attitude or by the people's attitude, so-called "public opinions"? If dependence means basically a "religious relationship," as Edgar Bauer rightly puts forward, then in the people's state the people remain *for me* the higher power, the "majesty" (for God and the prince have their real essence in "majesty") to which I stand in religious relations.—Like the sovereign ruler, the sovereign people would also be out of reach of

257 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.
258 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.
259 The German word here, "*Bevormundung*," implies paternalism in the most literal sense—treating someone like a child, making up their mind for them. In this sense, it is perhaps a stronger term than "paternalism." The idea of infantilization, and the indignity one suffers from that, is implicit in the term.
260 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.
261 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.
262 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.
263 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

any *law*. Edgar Bauer's entire attempt amounts to a *change of masters*. Instead of wanting to free the *people*, he should have been concerned with the sole realizable freedom, his own.

In the constitutional state, *absolutism* has finally come into conflict with itself, because it has broken into a duality: the government wants to be absolute, and the people wants to be absolute. These two absolutes will annihilate each other.

Edgar Bauer rails against the ruler's being determined by *birth*, by *chance*. But when "the people" will have become "the sole power in the state,"[264] don't we then have in it a master by *chance*? What then is the people? The people has always only been the *body* of the government: it is many under one (prince's) hat or many under one constitution. And the constitution is the—prince. Princes and peoples will persist as long as they don't both *fall together*. If there are many "peoples" under one constitution, as for example in the Persian monarchy and today, then these "peoples" only rank as "provinces." For me, anyway, the people is an—accidental power, a force of nature, an enemy that I must conquer.

What is one to imagine as an "organized"[265] people? A people "that has no more government," that governs itself. In which, therefore, no *I* stands out; a people organized by ostracism. The banishment of *Is*, ostracism, makes the people into an autocrat.

If you speak of the people, you must speak of the prince; for if the people is supposed to be a subject and make history, it must, like all acting beings, have a *head*, its "supreme head." Weitling sets this out in his "*Trio*,"[266] and Proudhon declares: "*Une société, pour ainsi dire acéphale, ne peut vivre.*"[267]

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264 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

265 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

266 Although it isn't clear in the way Stirner writes this here, this is most likely a reference to part 2 chapter 9 of Weitling's *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (Vivis, 1842), which was entitled "*Vom Trio*" ("about the trio"). This "trio" was the apex of Weitling's administrative hierarchy in his ideal society, and was composed of the leaders of the three branches of science—healing, physics, and mechanics.

267 ▸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité ou principes d'organization politique* (Paris, 1843), p. 485. This phrase, in French in the original, translates as: "a society which could be called headless cannot live".

The *vox populi* is now always held up to us, and "public opinion" is supposed to rule over our princes. Certainly the *vox populi* is the same as the *vox dei*; but aren't both rather useless, and isn't the *vox principis*[268] also *vox dei*?

One may be reminded here of the "nationals." To require the thirty-eight states of Germany to act as *one nation* can only be placed beside the senseless desire that thirty-eight swarms of bees, led by thirty-eight queens, should unite into one swarm. Bees they all remain; but it is not bees as bees that belong together and can unite with each other, but rather only the subservient bees are connected with the *ruling* queen bees. Bees and peoples are without will, and the *instinct* of their queens leads them.

If one were to refer the bees to their beehood,[269] in which they are, in any case, all equal to each other, one would be doing the same as they are now so stormily doing in referring the Germans to their Germanhood. Germanhood is exactly like beehood in this, that it bears in itself the necessity for divisions and separations, but without advancing as far as the last separation, where with the full implementation of separating, its end appears: I mean the separation of human being from human being. Germanhood indeed divides itself into different peoples and tribes, i.e., beehives; but the individual who has the quality of being German is still as powerless as the isolated bee. And yet only individuals can enter into association with each other, and all people's alliances and leagues are and remain mechanical compositions, because those assembled,[270] at least insofar as "peoples" are seen as the ones assembled, are *without will*. Only with the last separation does separation itself end and change into association.

Now the nationals are endeavoring to establish the abstract, lifeless unity of beehood; but the self-owned will fight for self-willed unity,

268 "The voice of the ruler."

269 It is interesting that in this passage the word translated as "beehood" is "*Bienentum*" and the one translated as "Germanhood" is "*Deutschtum.*" From this, what Stirner means by "property," which is "*Eigentum,*" should become clearer. My property is my "ownhood"... that is, it is what makes me my own.

270 "*Die Zusammentretenden*" —this noun comes from the verb "*zusammentreten*" which can indeed mean "to assemble," but can also mean "to trample underfoot," so that here this noun may have a double meaning that those brought together "mechanically" are being trampled underfoot.

for association. Here is the feature of all reactionary desires, that they want to set up something *universal,* abstract, an empty, lifeless concept, whereas the self-owned strive to unburden the sturdy, lively *particular* from the tangled mass of generalities. The reactionaries would be glad to pound a *people, a nation*, forth from the earth; the self-owned have only themselves in mind. Essentially, the two efforts that are on the agenda today, namely, the restoration of provincial rights, the old tribal divisions (Franks, Bavarians, etc., Lausitz, etc.), and the restoration of the whole nationality, come together as one. The Germans will only come into agreement,[271] i.e., unite[272] *themselves*, if they knock over their beehood as well as all beehives; in other words, when they are more than—German; only then can they form a "German Association." They have to not want to go back into their nationality, into the womb, to be born again, but rather let each one come into himself. How laughably sentimental, when one German grasps another's right hand and squeezes it with a sacred shiver, because "he too is a German"! With this, he has some claim! But that will certainly be considered touching so long as people go into raptures over "brotherhood," i.e., as long as they have a "*family attitude*." From the superstition of "filial piety," from "brotherhood" or "childlikeness," or however else the soft-hearted phrases of piety read, the nationals, who want a big *family of Germans*, aren't able to free themselves from the *family spirit*.

In any case, the so-called nationals would only have to understand themselves correctly to rise above their connection with the good-natured Germanhood fanatics. Because the association for material ends and interests, which they demand of the Germans, really amounts to nothing more than a voluntary association. Carrière enthusiastically cries out: "Railroads are to the more penetrating eye the way into a people's life, as it has appeared nowhere with such significance."[273] Quite right, it will be a *people's life* that has appeared nowhere, because it is not—a people's life. —So Carrière contests himself: "Pure humanity or humankind cannot be better represented

271 *Einig.*

272 *Vereinigen.*

273 ▸ Moriz Carrière, *Der Kölner Dom als freie deutsche Kirche. Gedanken über Nationalität, Kunst und Religion beim Wiederbeginn des Baues* (Stuttgart, 1843), p.4.

than by a people fulfilling its mission."[274] Indeed, only national identity is represented. "The vague generality is lower than the self-contained form, which is itself a whole, and lives as a living part of the truly universal, the organized." The people is precisely this "vague generality," and it is only a person that is the "self-contained form."

The impersonality of what one calls "people, nation" is clear also from the fact that a people which wants to manifest its *I* to the best of its power, puts the ruler *without will* at its head. It is situated in the alternative either to be subjected to a prince who *only realizes himself, his individual pleasures*—then it doesn't recognize in the "absolute master" its own will, the so-called people's will—or, to put a prince on the throne who asserts *no* will of his *own*—then it has a prince *without will*, whose place might be filled as well by some well-calculated clock-work. —Therefore, the understanding need only go one step further, it follows of itself that the people's *I* is an impersonal, "spiritual" power, the—law. It follows from this that the *I* of the people is a—phantasm, not an *I*. I am only *I* because I make myself, i.e., because no one else makes me, but rather I must be my own work. But how is it with that people's *I*? Chance plays it into the people's hand, chance gives it this or that lord by birth, contingencies provide it with the chosen one; he is not its (the "sovereign" people's) product, as I am my product. Think about this: someone tries to convince you that you're not your own *I*, but rather Hans or Kunz is your *I*! But that's how it goes for the people, and rightly so for it. Because the people has no more of an I than the eleven planets reckoned together have, even though they revolve around a common center.

Bailly's statement is typical of the slave mentality that persons have before the sovereign people, as before the prince. "I no longer have," he says, "any extra reason when the general reason has been pronounced. My first law was the nation's will; as soon as it had assembled, I knew nothing more than its sovereign will." He doesn't want to have any "extra reason," and yet this extra reason alone accomplishes everything. Similarly, Mirabeau rails in the words: "No power on earth has the right to say to the nations representatives: it

274 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

is my will[275]!"[276]

As with the Greeks, people would now like to make the human being a *zoon politicon*, a citizen of the state or a political person. Thus, he was regarded for a long time as a "citizen of heaven." But the Greek was degraded along with his *state*, the citizen of heaven becomes so along with his heaven; we, on the other hand, aren't willing to go down with the *people*, the nation and nationality, aren't willing to be mere *political* persons or politicians. Since the revolution they've striven for "the people's happiness," and insofar as they make the people happy, great, etc., they make us unhappy: the people's happiness is my unhappiness.

One readily sees again what empty gossip the political liberals utter with emphatic decorum in Nauwerck's *Über die Teilnahme am Staate*.[277] There the author complains about those who are indifferent and don't participate, those who aren't citizens in the full sense, and talks as if one could not be human at all if one did not participate fervently in state system, i.e., if one were not a politician. He's right about that; because if the state is considered the guardian of everything "human," then we can have nothing human without taking part in it. But what does this say against the egoist? Nothing at all, because the egoist himself is the guardian of humanity for himself, and says only these words to the state: "Get out of my sun."[278] Only when the state comes in contact with his ownness does the egoist take an active interest in it. If the condition of the state doesn't weigh down on the armchair scholar, is he to deal with it because it is his "most sacred duty"? As long as the state treats him as he wishes, what need does he have to look up from his studies? Let those who from their own interest want different conditions, deal with them. Not now, nor ever, will "sacred duty" bring people to consider the state, as little as they become disciples of science, artists, etc., from "sacred

275 "*Ich will*" more literally translates as "I will," but the latter, in English, is unfortunately ambiguous.

276 The quotations from Bailly and Mirabeau are both taken from Edgar Bauer's *Bailly und die ersten Tage der Französischen Revolution* (Charlottenburg, 1843).

277 "About Participation in the State." This book was published in Leipzig in 1844.

278 A reference to the story of the meeting between Diogenes the Cynic and Alexander the Great. When the emperor asked the cynic what he wanted, the latter responded, "Get out of my sun!"

duty." Egoism alone can drive them to it, and so it will be as soon as it gets much worse. If you showed people that their egoism required consideration of the state system, then you wouldn't have to call on them for long; but if you appealed to their love of the fatherland and the like, then you'd be preaching about this "service of love" to deaf hearts for a long time. Of course, in your sense, egoists would not participate in state affairs at all.

Nauwerck utters a genuine liberal phrase:

> *The person fulfills his calling completely only when he feels and knows himself as a member of humanity, and is active as such. The individual cannot realize the idea of* ***humanness*** *if he does not base himself on the whole of humanity, if he doesn't draw his strength from it like Antaeus.*[279]

In the same place he says: "The person's relation to the *res publica* is degraded by the theological perspective to a purely private matter, and is thus done away with by denial." As if the political perspective did otherwise with religion! There religion is a "private matter."

If, instead of "sacred duty," "human destiny," the "calling to full humanness," and similar commandments, one would hold up to people that their *self-interest* will waste away if they let everything go on is it's going in the state, then one would address them, without tirades, as one would have to address them at the decisive moment if he wants to achieve his aim. Instead, the theology-hating author says: "If at any time the state laid a claim on all its own, ours is such a time. The thinking person sees participation in the theory and practice of the state as a *duty*, one of the most sacred duties that falls to him"—and then brings the "the unconditional necessity that everyone participate in the state" closer into view.

Anyone in whose head or heart or both the state sits, anyone possessed by the state, or the *believer in the state*, is a politician and remains so forever.

"The state is the most necessary means for the complete development of humanity." It certainly has been so long as we wanted to

279 ▸ Karl Nauwerck, *Über die Teilnahme am Staate* (Leipzig, 1844), p. 16.

develop humanity; but if we want to develop ourselves, it can only be a means of hindering us.

Can one still reform and improve the state and the people now? As little as the nobility, the clergy, the church, etc.; one can dissolve, destroy, annihilate them, not reform them. Can I transform something nonsensical into sense through reform, or must I drop it outright?

From now on, what there is to be done is no longer about the state (the state constitution, etc.), but about me. With this all questions about royal power, the constitution, and so on, sink into their true abyss and their true nothingness. I, this nothing, will bring forth my *creations* from myself.

The *party*, whose praises some have recently sung, also belongs to the chapter of society.

In the state, the *party* counts. "Party, party, who shouldn't join one?" But the individual is unique, not a party member. He unites freely and freely separates again. The party is nothing but a state within the state, and in this smaller bee-state "peace" will also rule, just as in the larger. The very ones who cry most loudly that there must be an *opposition* in the state rail against any disagreement in the party. A proof that they too just want a—state. All parties shatter not against the state, but against the unique.

One hears nothing more frequently now than the admonition to remain faithful to his party; party people despise nothing so much as a factionalist. One must go with his party through thick and thin and unconditionally endorse and represent its main principles. Indeed, it isn't quite as bad here as with closed societies because these bind their members with fixed laws or statutes (for example, the orders, the Society of Jesus, etc.). But, nonetheless, the party stops being an association at the same moment in which it makes certain principles *binding* and wants to know that they are safe against attack; but this moment is precisely the act of birth of the party. Already, as a party, it is a *born society*, a dead association, and an idea that has become fixed. As a party of absolutism, it cannot want its members to doubt the irrefutable truth of this principle; they could only entertain this doubt if they were egoistic enough to want to be something else outside

their parties, i.e., nonpartisan. They cannot be nonpartisan as party people, but only as egoists. If you are a Protestant and belong to this party, then you can only justify Protestantism, at most "purify" it, not reject it; if you are a Christian and belong among the people of the Christian party, then you cannot go beyond this as a member of the party, but only when your egoism, your nonpartisanship, impels you to do it. What efforts the Christians, down to Hegel and the communists, have put out to make their party strong! They stick with it, that Christianity must contain the eternal truth, and one only needs to find it out, establish it, and justify it.

In short, the party cannot tolerate non-partisanship, and precisely in this egoism appears. What does the party matter to me? I'll still find enough to *associate* with me without having to swear to my flag.

Anyone who goes over from one party to another is upbraided as a "turncoat." Certainly, *morality* demands that one stick to his party, and to desert it means to stain oneself with the stigma of "unfaithfulness"; but ownness knows no commandment of "faithfulness, devotion, etc.," ownness allows everything, even desertion, defection. Unconsciously, even the moral let themselves be guided by this principle, when they're dealing with judging one who defects to their party, indeed, they're likely to make proselytes; only at the same time, they should gain an awareness of the fact that one must act *immorally* to act on one's own—here, that one must break faith, yes, even his oath, in order to determine himself rather than being determined by moral considerations. In the eyes of people of strict moral judgment, an apostate always shimmers in equivocal colors and won't easily earn their trust: indeed, the taint of "unfaithfulness," i.e., of an immorality, sticks to him. Among base men this view is almost universally found; as always, the enlightened get into uncertainty and confusion here as well, and the contradiction that inevitably results from the principle of morality doesn't come clearly into their awareness because of the confusion of their concepts. They don't dare to call the apostate immoral straight out, because they themselves are tempted to apostasy, to conversion from one religion to another, etc., and they also can't yet give up the standpoint of morality. And yet here was the opportunity to be seized for stepping outside of morality.

Are the own or unique perhaps a party? How could they be own if they were those who *belonged* to a party?

Or should one not deal with any party? Just by associating with them and entering into their circle one forms an *association* with them that lasts just so long as the party and I have one and the same goal. But today I still share the party's tendency, and by tomorrow I can no longer do so and I become "unfaithful" to it. The party has nothing *binding* (obligatory) for me, and I don't respect it; if I no longer like it, I become its enemy.

In every party that upholds itself and its existence, the members are unfree, or better un-own, to the degree that they lack egoism, that they serve the desire of the party. The independence of the party requires the lack of independence of the party members.

A party, of whatever sort it may be, can never do without a *confession of faith*. Because those who belong to the party must believe in its principles, they must not doubt or question it, it must be what is certain, what is unquestionable for the party member. This means: one must belong to a party body and soul, otherwise one is not truly a party man, but rather more or less an—egoist. Entertain any doubt of Christianity and you are already no longer a true Christian, you have lifted yourself to the "audacity" of raising a question about it and hauling it before your egoistic judgment seat. You have—*sinned*—against Christianity, this party cause (because it is certainly not a cause, for example, for the Jews, another party). But good for you, if you don't let yourself be frightened: your audacity helps you to ownness.

So then can an egoist ever seize onto or take up with a party? Yes, only he can't let the party seize onto or take him. The party remains at all times nothing but a *game* for him; he is in the game, he takes part.[280]

The best state would clearly be the one which has the most loyal

280 There is a wordplay here that would be confusing in translation. "*Partei*" refers specifically to a political party or "parties" to a contract or agreement; in other words it is a reference to *sides*. "*Partie*" can have several meanings including "game" as I chose above, but also a "party" in the sense of a group of companions going on an outing together. Byington chose "gathering" which may also be appropriate. The point Stirner is making is that the egoists do not take the party in any sense seriously.

citizens, and the more the devoted sense of *legality* is lost, the more the state, this system of morality, this moral life itself, becomes diminished in force and quality. With the "good citizens," the good state also degenerates and dissolves into anarchy and lawlessness. "Respect for the law!" The state as a whole is held together by this cement. "The law is sacred, and anyone who transgresses it is a *criminal*." Without crime, no state: the moral world—and that is the state—is stuffed full of rogues, swindlers, liars, thieves, etc. Since the state is the rule of law, its hierarchy, therefore the egoist, in all cases where *his* advantage runs up against the state, can only satisfy himself through crime.

The state cannot give up the claim that its laws and regulations are sacred. With this, the individual is considered precisely as the *unholy* (barbarian, natural human being, egoist), since he is against the state, which is precisely how the church once viewed him. For the individual, the state takes on the halo of a saint. So it adopts a law against dueling. Two people who both agree that they want to stake their life for a cause (no matter which one), must not be allowed to do so, because the state won't have it: it sets a penalty for it. So where is the freedom of self-determination? It's altogether another thing when, as in North America, for example, society determines to let the duelists bear certain negative *consequences* of their act, such as withdrawal of the credit previously enjoyed. To refuse credit is everyone's affair, and if a society wants to withdraw it for this or that reason, the person affected can't therefore complain about an infringement of his freedom: the society is just asserting its own freedom. This is no penalty for sin, no penalty for a *crime*. There the duel is no crime, but only an action against which society will take counter-measures, will set a defense. The state, however, stamps the duel as a crime, i.e., a violation of its sacred laws: it makes it a *criminal case*. If society leaves it to the decision of the individual whether he wants to draw negative consequences and inconveniences to himself by his actions, and in this way recognizes his free decision, then the state does just the opposite, denying all rights to the individual's decision, and confers the only right to its own decision, state law, so that anyone who goes against the state's commandment will be looked upon as if he had gone against God's commandment; a view which the church

also once maintained. Here God is the Sacred One in and of himself, and the commandments of the church, like those of the state, are the commandments of this Sacred One, which he delivers to the world through his anointed and rulers-by-the-grace-of-God. As the church had *mortal sins*, so the state has *capital crimes*; as the one had *heretics*, so the other has *traitors*; the one had *ecclesiastical penalties*, the other has *criminal penalties*; the one had *inquisitorial trials*, the other has *fiscal trials*; in short, there sins, here crimes, there sinners, here criminals, there inquisition and here—inquisition. Won't the sanctity of the state fall like that of the church? The awe of its laws, the reverence of its sovereignty, the humility of its "subjects"—will this last? Will the "sacred face" not be disfigured?

What a folly to demand of state power that it should enter into an honest fight with the individual, and, as one expresses himself with freedom of the press, share sun and wind equally! If the state, this concept, is to be an effective power, it must simply be a higher power against the individual. The state is "sacred" and should not expose itself to the "impudent attacks" of individuals. If the state is *sacred*, then there must be censorship. The political liberals acknowledge the former and deny the consequence. But in any case, they concede repressive penalties to it, because—they insist that the state is more than the individual and practices a justified revenge, called punishment.

Punishment only has a meaning when it is to grant atonement for the violation of a *sacred* thing. If something is sacred to someone, then if he treats it with hostility, he certainly deserves punishment. A person who allows a human life to continue to exist, because it is sacred to him, and he has a *dread* of infringing on it, is simply a—*religious* person.

Weitling lays the blame for crime on "social disorder" and lives in the expectation that under communist institutions crimes will become impossible because the temptations to them, such as money, will be removed. But since his organized society is also extolled as sacred and inviolable, he miscalculates in that kind-hearted opinion. Those who declared their support with their mouth for the communist society, but worked underhandedly for its ruin, would not be lacking. Besides, Weitling has to continue with "remedies against the natural remainder of human diseases and weaknesses," and "remedies"

always announce at the start that one considers individuals to be "called" to a certain "well-being"[281] and will consequently treat them in accordance with this "human calling." The *remedy* or *cure* is only the reverse side of *punishment*, the *theory of cure* runs parallel with the theory of punishment; if the latter sees in an action a sin against right, the former takes it for a sin *against himself*, as a wasting of his health. But the appropriate thing is for me to look at it as an action that *suits me* or that *doesn't suit me*, as hostile or friendly to *me*, i.e., that I treat it as my *property*, which I cultivate or destroy. Neither "crime" nor "disease" is an *egoist* view of the matter, i.e., a judgment coming *from me*, but from *something else*, namely whether it violates the *right*, generally, or the *health* in part of the individual (the sick one) and in part of the universal (society). "Crime" is treated implacably, "disease" with "loving kindness, compassion," and the like.

Punishment follows crime. If crime falls because the sacred disappears, punishment must no less be dragged into its fall; because it too only has meaning in relation to something sacred. They have abolished ecclesiastical punishments. Why? Because how someone behaves toward the "holy God" is his own affair. But as this one punishment, ecclesiastical punishment, has fallen, so all punishments must fall. As sin against the so-called God is a person's own affair, so is that against every sort of so-called sacred thing. According to our theories of penal law, with whose "timely improvement" people are struggling in vain, they want to *punish* people for this or that "inhumanity" and make the foolishness of these theories especially clear by their consequences, in that they hang the little thieves and let the big ones go. For violation of property, you have the penitentiary, while for "forced thought," suppression of "natural human rights," only—presentations and petitions.

The criminal code has continued existence only through the sacred, and falls to pieces by itself if they give up punishment. Now everywhere they want to create a new penal law without having reservations about punishment. But it is precisely punishment that must give way to satisfaction, which again cannot aim at satisfying right or

281 I have chosen to translate "*Heil*" as "well-being" rather than "salvation" in this context, because Weitling here is speaking of "remedies" for "diseases and weaknesses." However, both terms are good translations, and Weitling, as a Christian communist, may well have thought in terms of salvation.

justice, but at procuring a satisfactory outcome for *us*. If one does to us something we *won't put up with*, we break his power and bring our own to bear; we satisfy *ourselves* on him and don't fall into the folly of trying to satisfy right (the phantasm). The *sacred* isn't to defend itself against human beings, but rather the human being is to defend himself against human beings; as, of course, *God* too no longer defends himself against human beings, that God to whom once and in part, indeed, even now, all "God's servants" offered their hands to punish the blasphemer, as still to this very day, they offer their hands to the sacred. That devotion to the sacred also brings it about that without any lively interest of one's own, one only delivers malefactors into the hands of the police and the courts: an apathetic giving over to the authorities, "who will, of course, best administer sacred things." The people goes utterly nuts, sending the police against everything that seems immoral, or even only unseemly, to it; and this popular rage for the moral protects the police institution more than the mere government could possibly protect it.

In crime the egoist has up to now asserted himself and mocked the sacred; the breaking with the sacred, or rather of the sacred, can become general. A revolution never returns, but an immense, reckless, shameless, conscienceless, proud—*crime*, doesn't it rumble in the distant thunder, and don't you see how the sky grows ominously silent and gloomy?

The person who refuses to use his powers for such restricted societies as family, party, nation, still always longs for a worthier society, and thinks that he may have found the true object of love in "human society" or "humanity," and to sacrifice himself to it constitutes his honor; from now on he "lives for and serves *humanity*."

People is the name of the body, *state* the name of the spirit, of that *ruling person* that has suppressed me up to now. Some have wanted to transfigure peoples and states by expanding them to "humanity" and "universal reason"; but enslavement would only become still more intense through this expansion, and philanthropists and humanitarians are as absolute masters as politicians and diplomats.

Modern critics rail against religion because it sets God, the divine, the moral, etc., *outside* the human being or makes them something

objective, against which these critics simply move these same subjects *into* the human being instead. But these critics fall no less into the error of religion, giving the human being a "destiny," in that they also want to know him as divine, human, and the like: morality, freedom, and humanity, etc., are his essence. And like religion, politics also wanted to "*educate*" the human being, to bring him to the realization of his "essence," his "destiny," to *make* something out of him—namely a "true human being," the one in the form of the "true believer," the other in the form of the "true bourgeois citizen or subject." In fact, it comes to the same thing whether you call the destiny the divine or the human.

Under religion and politics, the human being is situated at the standpoint of *should*: he should become this or that, he should be so and so. Everyone brings this postulate, this commandment, not only up before others, but also before himself. Those critics say: You should be a whole, a free human being. So they are also tempted to proclaim a new *religion*, to set up a new absolute, an ideal, namely, freedom. Human beings *should* be free. Then, *missionaries* of freedom might even arise, as Christianity sent missionaries of the faith in the conviction that everyone was actually meant to become Christians. Freedom would then establish itself as a new *community*—as up to now faith has a church, morality has a state—and carry on a similar "propaganda" from that. Indeed, there can be no objection raised against assembling together; but so much the more must one oppose any renewal of the old *care* for our welfare,[282] education toward an end, in short, the principle of *making something* out of us, no matter whether it's Christians, subjects, or free people and human beings.

One may well say with Feuerbach and others that religion has removed the human from human beings, and has transferred it into a hereafter, that, unattainable there, it led its existence as a personal being for itself, as a "God": but the error of religion is in no way exhausted with this. One could very well drop the personality of the otherworldly human, could transform God into the divine, and one would still

282 "*Fürsorge*" can simply mean "care," but is also used for "welfare" in the modern sense of state benefits. In context here, Stirner seems to be referring to the "care" moral and religious crusaders have for the spiritual or moral welfare of those they strive to save, so I decided this phrase made that clearer.

remain religious. Because the religious consists in discontent with *present-day* human beings, in setting up a "perfection" for which to strive, in the "human being struggling for his completion."[283] ("You therefore *should* be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" —Matthew 5: 48): it consists in the fixation of an ideal, an absolute. Perfection is the "highest good," the *finis bonorum*[284]; the ideal for everyone is the perfect human being, the true, the free human being, etc.

The efforts of modern times aim to set up the ideal of the "free human being." If one can find it, there's a new—religion, because there's a new ideal; there's a new yearning, a new struggling, a new devotion, a new deity, a new contrition.

With the ideal of "absolute freedom," someone's up to the same tricks as with everything absolute, and according to Hess, for example, it's supposed to "be realizable in the absolute human society."[285] Indeed, immediately afterward this realization is called a "calling"; just as he then defines freedom as "morality": the kingdom of "justice" (i.e., equality) and "morality" (i.e., freedom) is supposed to begin.

One is ridiculous if, when the fellows of his tribe, family, nation, count for much, he—is nothing but "puffed up" over the merit of his fellows; but the one who only wants to be "human" is also blinded. None of them puts his worth in *exclusiveness,* but rather in *connectedness,* or the "tie," which joins him together with others, in ties of blood, nationality, humanity.

Today's "nationals" have again stirred up the dispute between those who think they have only human blood and human blood ties, and the others who insist upon their special blood and special blood ties.

If we disregard the fact that pride might reveal an overestimation, and take it solely for awareness, then we find an immense gap between the pride of "belonging to" a nation and thus being its property, and the pride in calling a nationality one's property. Nationality

283 ▸ Bruno Bauer (anonymously), "*Was ist jetzt der Gegenstand der Kritik?*" ("What Is Now the Object of Criticism?"), in Bruno Bauer (editor), *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, no. 8 (July 1844), p. 22.

284 "The aim of good men."

285 ▸ Moses Hess (anonymously), "*Sozialismus und Kommunismus,*" in Georg Herwegh (editor), *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), pp. 89-90.

is my characteristic, but the nation is my owner and mistress. If you have bodily strength, then you can apply it at a suitable place and have a sense of self or pride from it; if, however, your strong body has you, then it gives you the itch everywhere, and in the most unsuitable places, to show its strength: you can't shake anyone's hand without having to squeeze it.

The insight that one is more than a family member, more than a tribesman, more than an individual specimen[286] of the people, has finally led to people saying that one is more than all this because one is a human being, or: the human being is more than the Jew, the German, etc. "Therefore, let everyone be wholly and solely—human!" Couldn't one rather say: since we are more than what's been stated, we will therefore be this, as well as that "more"? Thus, human and German, human and Guelph, etc.? The nationals are right, one cannot deny his nationality; and the humanitarians are right, one must not remain in the bigotry of the national. The contradiction is resolved in *uniqueness;* the national is my characteristic. But I am not absorbed into my characteristic, as the human is also my characteristic, but I first give existence to the human being through my uniqueness.

History seeks for *the* human being: but it is I, you, we. Sought as a mysterious *essence,* as the divine, first as *God*, then as the *human being* (humanity, humaneness, humankind), it is found as the individual,[287] the finite, the unique.

I am the owner of humanity, am humanity, and do nothing for the welfare of another humanity. Fool, you who are a unique humanity, that you put on airs about wanting to live for another than you yourself are.

The relationship considered up to now of me to the *human world* offers such a wealth of phenomena that it will have to be taken up again and again on other occasions, but here where it is only to be broadly illustrated, it has to be broken off to make room for a perception of two other sides from which it radiates. Because, since I find myself in relation not only with human beings in so far as they show themselves in the concept "human being" or are human children

286 "*Individuum.*" Stirner generally uses "*Einzeln*" to name the individual in his or her uniqueness.

287 "*Einzelne*" as opposed to "*Individuum.*"

(children *of* humanity, in the way one speaks of children of God), but also with what they have of the human and call their own, and as I therefore relate not only to what they *are* through the human, but also to their human *possessions*: so, in addition to the human world, the world of the senses and that of ideas are to be brought into the circle of our discussion, and something said about what human beings call their own in sensuous as well as spiritual goods.

Depending on how a person had developed the concept of the human and made it imaginable,[288] he gave it to us as this or that person in authority to respect, and finally from the broadest understanding of this concept arose the command: "Respect the human being in everyone." But if I respect the human being, then my respect must likewise extend to human things, or to what is the human being's.

Human beings have something of their *own*, and *I* am supposed to recognize this own and hold it sacred. Their own consists partly in outer and partly in inner possessions. The former are things, the latter intellectual matters, thoughts, convictions, noble feelings, etc. But I am always only supposed to respect *rightful* or *human* possessions: the wrongful and inhuman I need not spare, because only *the* human being's own is the real own of human beings. Religion, for example, is an inner possession of this kind; because *religion* is free, i.e., is the human being's, *I* am not allowed to infringe upon it. *Honor* is also an inner possession; it is free, and I am not allowed to infringe upon it. (Action for insults, caricatures, etc.) Religion and honor are "spiritual property." In material property, the person stands at the top: my person is my first property. Therefore, freedom of the person; but only the *rightful* or human person is free, the other is locked up. Your life is your property; but it is sacred to human beings only if it is not that of an inhuman monster.

What material goods the human being as such cannot hold onto,

288 I.e., something that can be put forward. Stirner's phrase here is "*sich vorstellig gemacht hatte*." I could find no definition for "*vorstellig*" as such. Rather all the dictionaries I consulted only presented it as part of the phrase "*bei jedem vorstellig werden*" ("to go to someone; to complain to someone") which has no relation to what Stirner is saying. So I chose to assume that Stirner was using the adjective as it relates to the verb "*vorstellen*" which one can translate as "to imagine" among other things.

we may take from them: this is the meaning of competition, of freedom of trade. What he can't hold onto in spiritual goods is likewise forfeited to us: so far goes the freedom of discussion, of science, of criticism.

But *sanctified* goods are inviolable. Sanctified and guaranteed by whom? Initially by the state, society, but ultimately by the human being or the "concept," the "concept of the thing"; because the concept of sanctified goods is this, that they are truly human, or that the holder possesses them as a human being and not as an inhuman monster.

On the spiritual side a person's faith is such a good, as are his honor, his moral feeling, and indeed even his feeling of decency, of shame, etc. Acts (speeches, writings) that insult honor are punishable; attacks against "the basis of all religion"; attacks against political beliefs; in short, attacks against everything that a human being has "by right."

How far critical liberalism would extend the sacredness of goods, on this it has as yet made no statement, and probably also wrongly believes itself to be averse to all sacredness; but, as it fights against egoism, it must set limits on it, and must not let the inhuman monster attack human things. If it came to power, to its theoretical disdain for the "mass" there would have to correspond a practical repudiation.

What extension the concept "human being" gets, and what comes to the individual human being through it, thus what the human being and the human thing are, the various grades of liberalism differ on this, and the political, the social, the humane human being each always lay claim to more than the other for "the human being." The one who has best grasped this concept knows best what is "the human being's." The state still grasps this concept within political limitations, society within social limitations; humanity, so it's said, is the first to wholly grasp it, or "the history of humanity develops it." But if "the human being is discovered," then we also know the human being's own, the property of the human being, the human thing.

But let the individual human being lay claim to ever so many rights because the human being or the concept human being, i.e., because his being a human being, "gives him the right"[289] to them: what do

289 Stirner uses the word "*berichtigt*" here which generally translates as "corrects"

I care for his right and his claim? If he only has his right from the human being and doesn't have it from *me*, then for *me* he has no right. His life, for example, counts to *me* only for what it is *worth* to *me*. I respect neither his so-called property rights or his right to material goods, nor even his right to the "sanctuary of his inner being" or his right to have his spiritual goods and divinities, his gods, remain unharmed. His goods, the sensual as well as the spiritual, are *mine*, and I deal with them as property owner to the extent of my—power.

There's a broader meaning hidden in the *property question* than its narrow formulation allows one to bring out. Referred solely to what people call our possessions, it is capable of no solution; the determination is to be found only in the one "from whom we have everything." Property depends on the *owner*.

The revolution directed its weapons against everything that came "by God's grace," for example against divine right, in whose place the human was reinforced. To that granted by the God's grace is opposed that which is derived "from the human essence."

Now, just as the relationship of human beings to each other, as opposed to religious dogma which commands a "love for one another for God's sake," had to get its human position through a "love for one another for the sake of the human being," so the revolutionary teaching could do nothing else, as to what concerns the relation of human beings to the things of this world, than to establish that the world, which had up to now been arranged by God's order, henceforth belongs to "the human being."

The world belongs to "the human being," and should be respected by me as its property.

Property is what is mine!

Property in the bourgeois sense means *sacred* property, such that I have to *respect* your property. "Respect for property!" Therefore, the politicians would like everyone to possess their little piece of property, and have partly brought about an incredible parceling-out

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or "rectifies." In context, it is clear that Stirner means it in his own way, and he puts it in quotes to make that obvious. However, he may well have also meant it mockingly, in that the humanists or "humane liberals" like Feuerbach did present the "human being" as a kind of goal, a rectification or correction, of the actual individual human being.

through this effort. Everyone must have their bone on which to find something to chew.

The matter goes differently in the egoist sense. I don't shyly step back from your property, but see it always as my property in which I need to "respect" nothing. Just do the same with what you call my property!

With this view, we will most easily come to an understanding with each other.

The political liberals see to it that, if possible, all servitudes get removed, and everyone is a free lord on his ground, even if this ground only has so much soil that one person's manure would sufficiently saturate it. (That farmer married even in his old age "that he might profit from his wife's crap."[290]) Be it ever so small, if one only has his own, namely a *respected property*. The more such owners, such crap-holders,[291] the more "free people and food patriots" the state has.

Political liberalism, like everything religious, counts on respect, humanity, the loving virtues. That's why it lives in endless annoyance. Because in practice people respect nothing, and every day the small possessions get bought up again by the bigger owners, and the "free people" become day-laborers.

If, against this, the "small owners" had kept in mind that the large property was also theirs, they wouldn't have respectfully *excluded* themselves from it, and wouldn't have been excluded.

Property as bourgeois liberals understand it deserves the attack of the communists and Proudhon: it is intolerable, because the bourgeois property owner is really nothing but a propertyless person, one who is everywhere excluded. Instead of owning the world as he might, he doesn't even own the paltry point on which he turns round.

Proudhon doesn't want the *propriétaire*[292] but the *possesseur* or

290 "*Kote*," literally "feces."

291 "*Kotsassen*." A "*Landsassen*" is a freeholder. Here, Stirner creates a word by blending "*Kot*," which means feces, and the suffix "*-sassen*" which in general refers to someone who is in some way settled in a place. This seems to be his way of sarcastically pointing out the pettiness of these holdings. I chose to use the cruder "crap" over "feces" both because I think it reads better and because I think it better emphasizes the sarcasm.

292 I have left all the words in this passage that were in French in the original in that language here. Their meanings are pretty obvious.

usufruitier.[293] What does that mean? He doesn't want the land to belong to anyone; but the benefit of it—and even if one is entitled to only the hundredth part of this benefit, this fruit—is nonetheless his property which he can deal with as he sees fit. One who only has the benefit of an acre is assuredly not its property owner; still less the one who, as Proudhon wants it, must give up as much of the benefit as is not required for his needs; but he is the property owner of the share that is left to him. So Proudhon denies only this or that property, not property as such. If we no longer want to leave the land to the landowners, but want to appropriate it for ourselves, then we associate ourselves for this purpose, form an association, a *société*, that makes *itself* the property owner; if we succeed, then those others cease to be landowners. And as we drive them from the land, so we can drive them out from many other properties still, to make it *our* property, the property of the—*conquerors*. The conquerors form a society, which you can think of as so large that it gradually embraces all humanity; but so-called humanity as such is also just a thought (phantasm); the individuals are its actuality. And these individuals as a collective mass would treat soil and land no less arbitrarily than an isolated individual or a so-called *propriétaire*. Even so, therefore *property* remains, and that as "exclusive" too, in that *humanity*, that great society, excludes the *individual* from its property (perhaps only leases him a piece of it, grants it to him in fief) as it, in any case, excludes everything that is not humanity; for example, it doesn't allow the animal world to come into property.—So will it also remain and become. That in which *all* want to have a *share* will be taken away from the individual who wants to have it for himself alone; it is made *common property*. As a *common property* each one has his *share* in it, and this share is his *property*. So indeed, even in our old relations a house, which belongs to five heirs, is their common property; but a fifth part of the revenue is each one's property. Proudhon could save his extensive pathos, if he said: There are some things that belong only to a few, and on which the rest of us will from now on lay claim or—siege. Let's take them, since it's through taking that one comes into property, and the property that is for now still kept away

293 ▸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property?* (Paris, 1841), p. 83.

from us likewise came to the owners only by taking. It will be put to better use if it is in *all of our hands* than if the few are in charge of it. Let us therefore associate ourselves for the purpose of this robbery *(vol)*.—Instead he tells us the lie that society is the original possessor and the sole owner of inalienable rights; against it so-called property owners have become thieves *(La propriété c'est le vol)*; now if it takes the property away from the present owner, it robs him of nothing, because it is just asserting its inalienable right.—So far one comes with the phantasm of society as a *moral person*. On the contrary, what the human being can get belongs to him: the world belongs to *me*. Are you saying anything else with the opposite proposition: "The world belongs to *all*"? All are I and I again, etc. But you make a phantasm out of the "all" and make it sacred, so that then "all" become the awful *masters* of the individual. Then the ghost of "right" stands at their side.

Proudhon, like the communists, fights against *egoism*. That is why they are continuations and consequences of the Christian principle, the principle of love, of sacrifice for something universal, something alien. They complete, for example, in property, only what has long existed in the matter—namely the propertylessness of individuals. When the law says: *Ad reges potestas omnium pertinet, ad singulos proprietas; omnia rex imperio possidet, singuli dominio*,[294] it means this: The king is the property owner, because he alone can dispose of and deal with "everything"; he has *potestas*[295] and *imperium*[296] over it. The communists make this clearer in that they transfer that *imperium* to the "society of all." So: Since they're enemies of egoism, they are therefore Christians, or more generally, religious people, believers in ghosts, dependents, servants of whatever universal (God, society, etc.). Proudhon is also like the Christians in this, in that he attributes to God what he denies to human beings. He calls him the *Propriétaire* of the earth[297]. With this he proves that he can't think

294 Literally: "Power over all things pertains to kings, ownership belongs to individuals; the king possesses everything in terms of command, individuals in terms of lordship."

295 Power.

296 Command.

297 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

away the *property owner as such*; he comes at last to a property owner, but transfers him to the other world.

The property owner is neither God nor the human being ("human society"), but the individual.

Proudhon (also Weitling) believes he is saying the worst about property when he calls it theft (*vol*). Completely leaving aside the embarrassing question of what well-founded objection one could make against theft, we only ask: Is the concept of "theft" at all possible unless one lets the concept of "property" count? How can one steal if property doesn't yet exist? What belongs to no one cannot be *stolen;* you *don't steal* the water that you draw from the sea. Consequently, property is not theft, but a theft becomes possible only through property. Weitling also has to come to this, since he indeed regards everything as the *property of all:* if something is "the property of all," then indeed the individual who appropriates it to himself steals.

Private property lives only by the grace of the *law.* Only in law does it have its guarantee—indeed, possession is not yet property, it is only "mine" by consent of the law; it isn't a fact, *un fait* as Proudhon says, but a fiction, a thought. This is legal property, legitimate property, guaranteed property. It is *mine* not by *me* but by—*law.*

Still, property is the expression for *unlimited control* over something (thing, animal, human being) of which "I can dispose of as I see fit." According to Roman law, indeed, *ius utendi et abutendi re sua, quatenus iuris ratio patitur*,[298] an *exclusive* and *unlimited right;* but property is brought about by power. What I have in my power, that is my own. As long as I assert myself as holder, I am the property owner of the thing; if it gets away from me again, no matter by what power, for example, through my recognition of another's entitlement to the thing—then the property is extinguished. So property and possession come together as one. No right lying outside my power legitimizes me, but only my power; if I no longer have this, then the thing disappears from me. When the Romans had no more power against the Germanic peoples, the Roman world empire *belonged* to

298 "The right to use and abuse one's own property as far as the principle of right allows."

the latter, and it would sound ridiculous for one to insist that the Romans still remained the real owners. To whoever knows how to take and hold the thing, it belongs, until someone takes it away from him, as freedom belongs to the one who *takes* it.

Only power decides about property, and since the state, whether the state of the bourgeoisie or of paupers or of human beings as such, is the only powerful one, it alone is property owner; I the unique have nothing, and am only enfeoffed, am a vassal, and as such, a servant. Under the rule of the state, there is no property of *mine*.

If I want to increase the value of my own, the value of ownness, should I reduce property? As I have not been respected up to now, because the people, humankind, and a thousand other generalities were placed higher, so also to this day property has not been recognized in its full value. Also property was only the property of a ghost, e.g., the people's property; my whole existence "belonged to the fatherland"; *I* belonged to the fatherland, the people, the state, and so all that I called *my* own did too. Some demand of states that they should eliminate pauperism. It seems to me that this is asking the state to cut off its own head and lay it at its feet; as long as the state is the *I*, the individual *I* must be a poor devil, a non-*I*. The state has only one interest, to be rich itself; whether Michael is rich and Peter is poor is all the same to it; Peter could also be rich and Michael poor. It looks on indifferently as one grows poor and the other gets rich, unconcerned about this interplay. As *individuals* they are really equal before its face; in this it is just: before it they are both—nothing, as we "are altogether sinners before God"; however, it has a very strong interest in this, that those individuals who make it their *I* should have a share in its wealth; it makes them participants in *its property*. Through property, with which it rewards the individuals, it tames them; but this remains *its* property, and everyone has the usufruct of it only so long as he carries in himself the *I* of the state, or is a "loyal member of society"; in the opposite case, the property would be confiscated or made to melt away through embarrassing legal trials. Consequently, property is and remains *state property,* and not property of the *I*. That the state doesn't arbitrarily take away from the individual what he has from

the state, is just the same as this, that the state doesn't rob itself. Anyone who is a state-I, i.e., a good bourgeois citizen or subject, *as such an* I, not as an own *I*, holds his fief undisturbed. The code puts it like this: property is what I call mine "by virtue of God and law." But it is mine by virtue of God and law only so long as—the state has nothing against it.

In expropriations,[299] the confiscation of weapons, and the like (as when, for example, the Treasury takes away inheritances if the heirs don't come forward early enough), indeed, the otherwise concealed principle that only the people, "the state," is a property owner, while the individual is a vassal, leaps to the eyes.

The state, I wanted to say, cannot intend that anyone would have property *for his own sake,* or actually be rich or indeed even just well-to-do; it can bestow nothing, allow nothing to come, grant nothing, to me as me. The state cannot control pauperism, because the poverty of possession is the poverty of my own. Anyone who is nothing but what chance or another, namely the state, makes of him quite rightly has nothing but what another gives him. And this other will only *give* him what he *deserves,* what he is worth through *serving*. He doesn't make use of himself, but rather the state makes use of him.

Political economy[300] deals a lot with this subject. It goes, however, far beyond the "political"[301] and goes beyond the concepts and horizon of the state, which only knows state property and can distribute only this. Thus it ties the possession of property to conditions, as it ties everything to them, for example, marriage, in that it allow allows marriage sanctioned by it to count, and snatches this from my power. But property is only *my* property, when I hold it unconditionally; only I, as *unconditional* I, have property, enter into a love relationship, carry on free trade.

The state doesn't care about me and mine, but about itself and its: I count for something to it only as *its child*, as a "child of the country"; as *I*, I am nothing at all to it. What happens to me as *I*

299 In this instance, meaning expropriations by the state as in eminent domain.

300 "*Nationalökonomie*" translates as "economics" or "political economy."

301 "*Nationale*" This literally means "national," but I've taken a liberty here in order to keep Stirner's wordplay in the English. "Political" seems to keep Stirner's meaning intact.

is, for the state's understanding, something *accidental*, my wealth as well as my impoverishment. But if I with all that is mine am an accident for it, this proves that it cannot conceive of *me*: *I* go beyond its conceptions—or its understanding is too limited to conceive of me. Therefore, it can't do anything for me either.

Pauperism is *my lack of worth,* the phenomenon that I can't make use of myself. Therefore, state and pauperism are one and the same. The state doesn't let me come to my worth, and exists only through my worthlessness: it always presumes to *draw benefit* from me, i.e., to exploit, to deplete, to consume me, even if this consumption only consists in my supplying a *proles*[302] (proletariat); it wants me to be "its creation."

Then pauperism can only be removed when I as *I make use* of myself, when I give myself worth, and make my own price myself. I have to rise up in revolt to rise in the world.

What I create—flour, canvas, or iron and coal—which I laboriously win from the earth, is *my* work that I want to make worthwhile for me. But I can complain a long time that I am not paid for my work according to its worth; the payer will not listen to me, and the state will likewise react apathetically so long as it doesn't believe it has to "appease" me, so that I don't break out with my dreaded might. But this "appeasement" is the end of the matter, and if it occurs to me to demand more, then the state will turn on me with all the force of its lion's paws and eagle's claws; because it is the king of beasts, the lion and the eagle. If I refuse to be satisfied with the price it sets for my goods and labor, if instead I strive to determine the price of my goods myself, i.e., "to pay myself," then, first of all, I get into a conflict with the buyers of the goods. If this is resolved by an agreement on both sides, the state would not easily make objections; because how individuals deal with each other is of little concern to it, so long as, in doing this, they don't get in its way. Its harm and its danger begin only when they don't get along with each other, but rather, because no arrangement is made, grab each other by the head. The state cannot tolerate that human being stand in direct relationship to human being; it has to come between as—*mediator,* has to—*intervene*. What

302 Literally, "offspring."

Christ, the saints, the church were, the state has become—namely, "mediator." It tears human being from human being to place itself in the middle as "spirit." The workers who demand higher wages are treated as criminals, as soon as they want to *force* it. What should they do? Without force they don't get it, and in force the state sees a self-help, a determination of price by myself, a genuine, free utilization of one's property, that it can't allow. What then should the workers do? Stick to themselves and ask nothing from the state?

But, as things stand with my physical work, so it is also with my intellectual work. The state allows me to utilize all my thoughts and to bring them to everyone (indeed, I already utilize them, for example, through this, that they bring honor to me from the listeners, and the like); but only so long as *my* thoughts—are *its* thoughts. On the other hand, if I harbor thoughts of which it doesn't approve, i.e., which it can't make its own, then it doesn't allow me to utilize them at all, to bring then into *exchange*, into *intercourse*. *My* thoughts are free only when they are granted to me by the state's grace, i.e., if they are the state's thoughts. It allows me to philosophize freely only insofar as I prove myself as a "state philosopher"; though I am not allowed to philosophize *against* the state, it also looks upon it gladly when I help it out of its "deficiencies," "advancing" it. Therefore, since I'm only allowed to act as I myself as the state graciously permits, with its certificate of legitimacy and police pass, so too it is not allowed to me to utilize what is mine, unless this is shown to be its, which I hold as a fief from it. My ways must be its ways or it will seize me; my thoughts, its thoughts, or else it stops my mouth.

The state has nothing to be more afraid of than my worth, and there is nothing that it must try more carefully to prevent than every opportunity that may come to me to *make a worthwhile use* of myself. *I* am the mortal enemy of the state, which always hovers between the alternatives: It or I. Therefore it pays strict attention not only to not letting *me* count, but also to thwarting what is *mine*. In the state, there is no—property, i.e., no property of the individual, but only state property. I have what I have only through the state, as I am what I am only through it. My private property is only what the state leaves to me of *its own,* in that it *cuts off* other state members from it (makes

it private); it is state property.

But, in opposition to the state, I feel more and more clearly that a great power is still left to me, power over myself, i.e., over everything that is suitable[303] only to me and that only *is,* in being my own.[304]

What do I do if my ways are no longer its ways, my thoughts no longer its thoughts? I look to myself, and ask nothing of it! In *my* thoughts, which I get sanctioned by no assent, no permission, no grace, I have my actual property, a property with which I can carry on trade. Because as mine they are my *creations,* and I am in a position to give them away in return for *other* thoughts: I give them up and in exchange for them take others, which are then my newly bought property.

What then is *my* property? Nothing but what is in my *power!* To what property am I entitled? To any to which I—*empower* myself. I give myself property rights by taking property to myself, or giving myself the property owner's *power,* full power, empowerment.

That over which I have power that others cannot snatch from me remains my property; well then, let power decide upon property, and I will expect everything from my power! Alien power, power that I leave to another, makes me a bondsman; so may my own power make me an owner. May I then pull back the power that I have conceded to others out of ignorance about the strength of my own power! May I say to myself, where my power reaches, that is my property, and may I lay claim to everything as property that I feel myself strong enough to attain, and may I get my actual property to extend as far as *I* authorize, i.e., empower, myself to take.

Here egoism, selfishness must decide; not the principle of *love,* not love-motives like compassion, charity, kindness, or even justice and fairness (because *iustitia* too is a phenomenon of—love, a love product): love recognizes only *sacrifices* and calls for "self-sacrifice."

Egoism has no intention of sacrificing anything, of giving up anything; it simply decides: what I need I must have and will get for myself.

All attempts to provide rational laws of property leaked out of the

303 "*Eignet.*"
304 "*Eigen.*"

bosom of *love* into a desolate sea of regulations. One can't even exclude socialism and communism from this. Everyone is supposed to be supplied with sufficient means, for which it matters little whether one still finds them socialistically in a personal property or communistically ladles them from the community of goods. The individual's sense remains the same in this: it remains a sense of dependence. The distributive *board of equity* lets me get only what the sense of equity, its *loving* care for all, dictates. For me, the individual, there lies no less of an offense in *collective wealth* than in that of *individual others;* neither the former nor the latter is mine; whether the wealth belongs to the collectivity which allows part of it to flow to me, or to individual possessors, is for me the same constraint, as I can decide nothing about either. On the contrary, communism pushes me back even more, through the abolition of all personal property, into dependence on another, namely the generality or collectivity; and as loudly as it always attacks the "state," what it intends is itself a state, a status, a state of affairs that restrains my free movement, a supreme lordship over me. Communism rightly rebels against the pressure that I experience from individual property owners; but still more horrifying is the power that it puts in the hands of the collectivity.

Egoism takes a different route for eradicating the propertyless rabble. It doesn't say: Wait and see what the board of equity will—give you in the name of the collectivity (because such a gift has always taken place in "states," each receiving "according to desert," and so according to the measure to which each was able to *deserve* it, to earn it by *service),* but rather: Seize and take what you need! Thus, the war of all against all is declared. *I* alone decide what I will have.

"Now, this is really no new wisdom, because self-seekers have held to it at all times!" It's not at all necessary that the thing be new, if only the *awareness* of it is existing. But this latter couldn't claim great age, unless perhaps one includes Egyptian and Spartan law here; because how little it is known is clear from the allegation above, which speaks contemptuously of "self-seekers." One should only know this, that the method of seizing is not contemptible, but manifests the clear action which some egoists agree together to take.

Only when I expect neither from individuals nor from a collectivity

what I can give myself, only then do I escape the bonds of—love; the rabble stops being rabble only when it *seizes*. Only the fear of seizing and the corresponding punishment make it a rabble. Only that seizing is *sin,* crime, only this definition creates a rabble. And it is to blame that it remains what it is, because it lets this rule be in force, as are, more especially, those who self-seekingly (to give them back their favored word) demand that this rule be respected. In short, the lack of *awareness* of the "new wisdom," the old consciousness of sin, alone bears the blame.

If people reach the point where they lose respect for property, then everyone will have property, as all slaves become free people as soon as they no longer respect the master as master. *Associations* will then, in this matter as well, multiply the individual's means and secure his contested property.

In the opinion of the communists the community should be the property owner. On the contrary, *I* am the property owner, and I only come to an agreement with others about my property. If the community doesn't do what suits me, I rise up against it and defend my property. I am the property owner, but property *is not sacred*. Am I merely to be the possessor? No, up to now one was only a possessor, secured in the possession of a parcel of land by leaving others in possession of a parcel of land; but now *everything* belongs to me, I am the owner of *everything that I need* and can get hold of. If one socialistically says, society gives me what I need,—then the egoist says, I take what I need. If the communists conduct themselves like paupers, the egoist behaves as a property owner.

All attempts to make the rabble happy and all swan brotherhoods,[305] which arise from the principle of love, must fail. Only from egoism can the rabble get help, and it must provide this help to itself—and will provide it to itself. If it doesn't let itself be forced to fear, it is a

305 This may be a reference to the "swan-brethren" of the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady, a religious brotherhood founded in1318 of which Hieronymus Bosch became a member, or to the Order of the Swan, a chivalrous order founded in 1440. Both involved veneration of Mary, the so-called mother of God, and both were probably involved in charitable works. It most likely refers to the latter, since Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia made an attempt to revive this order in 1843.

power. "...people would lose all respect... if I did not force them to fear...," says bugbear Law in *Der gestiefelte Kater.*[306]

Thus, property should not and cannot be done away with; it must rather be snatched from ghostly hands and become *my* property; then the false awareness, that I cannot entitle myself to as much as I need, will vanish.

"But what could the human being not need?!" Well, whoever needs much and knows how to get it, has at all times gotten it, as Napoleon got the continent and the French got Algiers. Therefore, it simply depends on this: that the respectful "rabble" finally learns to get what it needs. If it reaches out too far for you, well then, defend yourselves. You have no need to good-heartedly—bestow anything on it, and when it gets to know itself, or rather whoever from the rabble gets to know himself, he casts off the vulgarity of the rabble, by saying no thanks to your charity. But it remains ridiculous that you declare the rabble "sinful and criminal," if it doesn't like living off your good deeds, because it can do something good for itself. What you bestow cheats it and strings it along. Defend your property, and then you will be strong; if, on the other hand, you want to preserve your ability to bestow, and possibly even have more political rights the more charity (poor rate) you can give, this will work just as long as the recipients let you work it.[307]

In short, the property question can't be solved as amicably as the socialists, indeed, even the communists, dream. It will only be solved in the war of all against all. The poor only become free and property owners when they—*rebel, rise up*. However much one bestows on them, they will still always want more; because they want nothing less than that finally—nothing more gets bestowed.

One will ask, but how will it be then, when the have-nots take courage? What sort of compensation is there to be then? One might

306 *Puss-in-Boots,* a satirical fairy tale play by the romantic writer Ludwig Tieck. The full quote is "These people would lose all respect for me, if I did not force them to fear me like this." (Act 3, Scene 7).

307 ▸ In a registration bill for Ireland, the government made the proposal to let people who pay £5 sterling in poor rates be voters. One who gives charity thus acquires political rights, or elsewhere becomes a swan-knight. [See note 58 above for "swan-knight."]

as well ask that I cast a child's birth chart. To know what a slave will do once he has broken his chains, one must—await.

In Kaiser's pamphlet (*The Personality of the Property Owner in Reference to Socialism and Communism, etc.*[308]), worthless for its lack of form as well as substance, he hopes from the *state* that it will bring about an equalization of property. Always the state! The great papa![309] As the church was proclaimed and looked upon as the "mother" of believers, so the state completely has the face of the provident father.

Competition shows itself to be most precisely connected with the principle of the bourgeois way of life. Is it anything other than *equality (égalité)?* And isn't equality just a product of the same revolution that was brought forth by the bourgeoisie, the middle classes? As no one is kept from competing with everyone in the state (except the prince, because he represents the state itself) and working his way up to their height, indeed, overthrowing them or exploiting them to his own advantage, surpassing them and by greater effort getting hold of their wealth, this serves as clear evidence that before the tribunal of the state, everyone has only the value of a "mere person[310]" and should not expect any preferential treatment. Overrun and outbid as much as you like and can; that won't concern me, the state! With each other you are free in competing, you are competitors; that is your *social* position. But before me, the state, you are nothing more than "mere persons"![311]

308 A pamphlet by Heinrich Wilhelm Kaiser, a German writer, about French socialism and communism.

309 Literally, "*der Herr Papa!*", that is, Mr. Papa or Lord Papa.

310 "*Individuum*" not "*Einzelne*" in this instance. Here Stirner seems to mean a legally-recognized "person." Thus, in our times, a business corporation might be an "*Individuum*" but not an "*Einzelne.*"

311 ▸ Minister Stein [a progressive Prussian statesman] used this expression about Count von Reisach [a German administrative official, archivist, and writer], when he so cold-bloodedly left the latter at the mercy of the Bavarian government, because to him, as he said, a government like Bavaria must be worth more than a mere person." Reisach had written against Montgelas [Bavarian statesman and reformer] at Stein's bidding, and Stein later agreed to giving up Reisach, which Montgelas demanded on account of this very book. See Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs, *Politische Vorlesungen. Unser Zeitalter und wie es geworden, nach seinen politischen, kirchlichen und wissenschaftlichen Zuständen, mit besondern Bezug auf Deutschland und*

What was put forward in the form of principle or theory as the equality of all has simply found its realization and practical carrying out in competition; because *égalité* is—free competition. Before the state all are—mere persons; in society, or in relation to others, competitors.

I need be nothing more than a mere person to be able to compete with everyone else, except for the prince and his family, a freedom which was formerly impossible in that only through one's corporation,[312] and within it, did one enjoy any freedom of effort.

In the guild and feudalism the state acts in an intolerant and fussy manner, granting *privileges;* in competition and liberalism it acts in a tolerant and permissive manner, only granting *patents* (documents assuring the applicant that the profession stands open under patent to him) or "licenses." Now, since the state has left everything to the *applicants,* it must come into conflict with all, because each and all are eligible to apply. It will be "stormed," and will go down in this storm.

Is "free competition" then actually free? Is it, indeed, actually a "competition," namely, one of *persons*, as it claims to be, because it bases its right on that title? It originated, in fact, in persons getting free from personal rule. Is a competition free, which the state, this ruler in bourgeois principle, restricts with a thousand barriers? There a rich manufacturer does splendid business, and I want to compete with him. "At any rate," says the state, "I have no objection to make to your *person* as competitor." Yes, I reply, but for that I need a space for buildings, I need money! "That's bad; but if you have no money, you can't compete. You aren't allowed to take anything from anyone, because I protect and privilege property." Free competition is not "free," because I lack the *things* for competition. Against my *person* there can be no objection, but because I don't have the things, my person must also withdraw. And who has the necessary things? Perhaps that manufacturer? Well then, I could take them away from him! No, the state has them as property, the manufacturer only as fief, as possession.

But since it won't work with the manufacturer, I'll compete with

namentlich Preußen, volume 1 (Halle, 1843), p. 280.

312 "*Korporation*" in this instance doesn't refer to a modern business corporation, but to the various guilds, fraternities, and the like through which medieval society operated.

the professor of jurisprudence; the man is a dimwit, and I, who know a hundred times more than he, would make his lecture room empty. "Have you studied and graduated, friend?" No, but what of that? I amply understand what is necessary for teaching the subject. "I'm sorry, but competition isn't 'free' here. There is nothing to say against your person, but you lack the *thing,* the doctoral degree. And this degree, I, the state, require. First ask me for it respectfully, then we will see what's to be done."

This, then, is the "freedom" of competition. The state, *my master,* first qualifies me to compete.

But do *persons* actually compete? No, again, only *things!* Money in the first place, etc.

In rivalry one will always be left behind the other (for example, a poetaster behind a poet). But it makes a difference whether the unlucky competitor's lack of means is personal or material, and also whether the material means can be won by *personal force* or are to be obtained only by *grace,* only as a gift, as, for example, when the poorer man has to leave, i.e., present, to the rich man his riches. But if I have to wait at all for state *approval* to receive or use the means (for example, in receiving a doctorate), then I have the means by the *grace of the state.*[313]

So free competition has only the following meaning: to the state all count as its equal children, and everyone can run hurry-scurry *to earn the state's goods and largess.* Therefore, all chase after belongings,[314] credit,[315] possessions (be it money or positions, titles of honor, etc.): after the *thing.*

In the mind of the bourgeoisie everyone is a possessor or "property owner." Why is it now that most people still have next to nothing? Here's why: because most people are already glad over being possessors

313 ▸ In colleges and universities poor men compete with rich. But they are able to do so in most cases only through scholarships, which—a significant point—almost all come down to us from a time when free competition was still far from being a controlling principle. The principle of competition establishes no scholarships, but says, help yourself, provide yourself with the means. What the state gives for such purposes it pays out from self-interested motives, to educate "servants" for itself.

314 "*Habe.*"

315 "*Haben.*"

at all, even if it's just of some rags, as children are glad about their first long pants or even the first penny given to them. More precisely, however, the matter is to be grasped as follows. Liberalism came up right away with the declaration that it belongs to the human essence not to be property, but property owner. Since it was in this case about "the human being," not the individual, the how-much, which directly made up the special interest of the individual, was left to him. Thus, the individual's egoism retained the freest leeway in this how-much, and carried on a tireless competition.

However, the lucky egoism had to become offense for the less fortunate, and the latter, still basing themselves on the principle of humanity, posed the question of the how-much of possession, and responded by saying that "the human being should have as much as he needs."

Would *my* egoism be able to let itself be satisfied with that? What "the human being" needs by no means serves as a standard for me and my needs; because I could have use for more or less. I must rather have as much as I am capable[316] of appropriating.

Competition suffers from the disadvantage that the *means* for competing are not at everyone's command, because they aren't gathered from personality, but from chance circumstance. Most are *without means* and therefore *without goods*.

That's why the socialists demand means for all and aim for a society that provides means. We no longer recognize your cash value, they say, as your capacity; you must show a different capacity, namely your *labor power*. In the possession of some belongings, or as a "holder," the human being certainly shows himself as a human being; this is why we also let the property-holder, whom we called "property owner," remain valid for so long. Still you possess the things only so long as you don't "get kicked off this property."

The property-holder is capable, but only so far as others are incapable. Since your product forms your capability only so long as you are capable of keeping hold of it, i.e., so long as *we* are incapable of doing anything with it, look about you for another capability; because now,

316 In German, "*vermögend*" also translates as "wealthy," and Stirner may be having some fun with words here.

through our power, we surpass your alleged capability.

An exceptionally large gain was made, when being considered a property-holder was achieved. With that, bondage was abolished, and everyone who had up to then been bound to a master's service, and had more or less been his property, now became a "master." Only from this time on your credit and your belongings are no longer enough and will no longer be recognized; on the contrary, your working and your work rise in value. We now respect your *mastery* of things, as we formerly did your holding them. Your work is your capability! You are only a master or property-holder of what comes by *work*, not by *inheritance*. But since nowadays, everything has come by inheritance, and every penny that you possess bears not a labor-stamp but an inheritance stamp, everything must be melted down again.

Is my work then actually my sole capability, as the communists suppose, or isn't it rather everything of which I am capable? And doesn't the workers' society itself have to admit this, since it also supports, for example, sick people, children, the elderly, in short, those unable to work? These are still capable of many things, for example, preserving their life, instead of taking it. If they are capable of making you desire their continued existence, then they have a power over you. To one who exercised no power at all over you, you would grant nothing; he could perish.

So what you are *capable* of is your capability! If you are capable of giving pleasure to thousands, then thousands will reward you; for it is indeed in your power not to do it, so they have to purchase your deed. If you aren't capable of winning anyone over, you may just starve.

Now am I, who am capable of much, perhaps to have nothing over the less capable?

We all sit in the midst of abundance; am I not supposed help myself as well as I can, but rather just wait and see how much is left for me through equal division?

Against competition the principle of pauper society rises up: *partition.*

The individual cannot bear to be considered a mere *part,* a part of society, because he is *more;* his uniqueness fends off this limited view.

Therefore, he doesn't expect his capability to be allocated by others,

and even in the workers' society the concern arises that an equal allocation will cause the strong to be exploited by the weak; he rather expects to draw his capability from himself, and now says: my capability is what I am capable of having. Doesn't the child possess quite a capability in its smiling, its playing, its screaming, in short, in its mere existence? Are you able to resist its desire, or don't you, as its mother, hold out your breast to it; as its father, as much of your belongings as it needs? It compels you, and therefore it possesses what you call yours.

If your person matters to me, then you pay me with your very existence; if I only care about one of your qualities, then your compliance perhaps, or your aid, has a value (a cash value) for me, and I *purchase* it.

If you don't know how to give yourself anything more than a cash value, in my estimation, the a situation we learn from history, in which German natives were sold to America, could repeat itself. Should those who let themselves be bartered away be worth more to the seller? He preferred hard cash to this living merchandise, which didn't know how to make itself precious to him. That he found nothing more valuable in it was, however, a defect in his capabilities; but only a scoundrel gives more than he has. How was he supposed to show respect, when he didn't have it, indeed, hardly could have it for such a pack?

You behave egoistically when you respect each other neither as holders nor as paupers or workers, but as a part of your capability, as "*useful entities.*" Then you will neither give anything to the holder ("property owner") for his possessions, nor to the one who works, but only to the one who *you need.* The North Americans ask themselves: *Do we need a king?* and answer: *He and his work aren't worth a cent to us.*

If one says that competition throws everything open to all, the expression is not accurate, and one would express it better like this: it makes everything *purchasable.* Since competition *surrenders*[317] it all to them, it leaves it all to their appraisal[318] or their estimation, and

317 "*Preisgibt.*"
318 "*Preise.*"

demands a price[319] for it.

But those who want to buy usually lack the means to make themselves buyers: they have no money. Indeed, the purchasable things are to be had for money ("Everything is to be had for money!"), but money is precisely what's lacking. But where is one to get money, this viable or circulating property? Know then, you have as much money[320] as you have—power; because you count for[321] as much value[322] as you get hold of for yourself.

One doesn't pay with money, of which there can come to be a lack, but with one's capability, through which alone we are "capable"; because one is a property owner only so far as the arm of one's power reaches.

Weitling thought up a new means of payment, work. But the real means of payment remains, as always, *capability*. With what you have "in your capability" you pay. Therefore, think about the expansion of your capabiliities.

In saying this, one is still right there again with the slogan: "To each according to his capability!" Who's supposed to give to me according to my capability? Society? Then I would have to put up with its estimation of me. Rather, I will *take* according to my capability.

"Everything belongs to everyone!" This proposition comes from the same empty theory. To each belongs only what he is capable of. If I say: *The world belongs to me*, that too is actually empty talk, which has meaning only insofar as I respect no alien property. But to me belongs only as much as I am capable of, or have the capability for.

A person isn't worthy of having what he allows to be taken from him out of weakness; he isn't worthy of it, because he isn't capable of it.

People have raised a tremendous uproar over the "thousand-year wrong" that the rich are committing against the poor. As if the rich were to blame for poverty, and the poor were not equally to blame for riches! Is there another difference between the two than that of capability and incapability, of the capable and the incapable? Of what,

319 "*Preis.*"
320 "*Geld.*"
321 "*Giltst.*"
322 "*Geltung.*"

then, does the crime of the rich consist? "Of their hard-heartedness." But who then has supported the poor, who has provided their nourishment when they were no longer able to work, who has given alms, those alms that even have their name from kindheartedness (*eleemosyne*)[323]? Haven't the rich always been "kindhearted"? Aren't they "charitable" to this day, as poor-taxes, hospitals, foundations of all sorts, etc., prove?

But all that is not enough for you! They are undoubtedly then supposed to share with the poor? Here you demand that they should abolish poverty. Aside from the fact that hardly anyone among you would act this way, and that this one would be a fool, just ask yourselves: why should the rich suffer badly[324] and give up *themselves,* when such an action would be much more useful to the poor? You, who have your *thaler* a day, are richer than thousands who live on four *groschen*.[325] Is it in your interest to share with the thousands, or isn't it rather in theirs?

The intention connected with competition is less that of doing the thing the best, than that of doing it as *profitably*, as productively, as possible. People study to get a position (study to be a good breadwinner[326]), study groveling and flattery, routine and "business sense," work "for appearances and cash."[327] So while it's apparently about doing "good service," in truth, a person is only looking out for a "good business" and money-making. He supposedly does the thing only for the sake of the thing, but in fact, because of the profit it yields. Indeed, he would prefer not to be censor, but he wants to be—promoted; he would like to judge, administer, etc. according to his best convictions, but he fears transfer or even dismissal; above all things, a person has to—live.

323 That is, "of, or pertaining to, alms," derived from the Greek word for pity.

324 "*Haare lassen*" is a figure of speech for suffering badly. This makes more sense to me in context than Byington's more literal translation.

325 To get the feel of this comparison, think of someone who makes, say, $100 a day as compared to someone who makes $20 a day.

326 Literally, "*Brotstudium,*" that is, "bread studies."

327 "*auf den Schein*"... "*Schein*" can translate both as "appearance" or "appearances" and as "banknote" or "bill" as in a dollar bill. I assume that Stirner is playing with words here and intends both meaning: one works to keep up appearances and to make money.

So this hustle and bustle is a fight for *dear life,* and, in a step-by-step progression, for more or less "good living."[328]

And yet, all their toil and trouble brings most of them nothing but "bitter life" and "bitter poverty." All the bitter earnestness for this!

Ceaseless self-promotion[329] doesn't let us take a breath, to come to a peaceful *enjoyment;* we don't take pleasure in our possessions.

But the organization of work affects only such work as others can do for us, butchering, tillage, etc.; the rest remain egoistic, because no one can, for example, produce your musical compositions, carry out your painting projects, etc., in your place: Nobody can replace Raphael's works. The latter are the works of a unique individual, which only he is capable of achieving, whereas the former deserve to be called "human", because what is one's own in them is of little importance, and just about "any human being" can be trained for them.

Since now society can take into consideration only work for the public good or *human* work, so one who does something *unique* remains without its care; indeed, he might find himself disturbed by its intervention. The unique one will no doubt work his way out from society, but society brings forth no one who is unique.

It is therefore always helpful that we reach an agreement about *human* works, so that they don't take up all our time and effort as they do under competition. To this extent, communism will bear its fruits. Before the rule of the bourgeoisie, even that of which all human beings are capable, or could become capable, was tied to a few and withdrawn from the rest: it was a privilege. To the bourgeoisie it seemed fair to put back into play[330] everything that appeared to be there for every "human being." But because it was put back into

328 "*Wohlleben*" can be translated as "life of luxury" and has the sense not so much of earning a good living or making good pay as of "living well" or living "high on the hog."

329 "*Werben,*" more literally, "advertisement," "publicity," or the broader attempt to attract others; but in this context, Stirner is specifically referring to the need to promote oneself in the context of bourgeois competition—thus, both the need of business owners to advertise and the need of workers to look good to potential employers.

330 "*Freizugeben.*"

play,[331] it was still given[332] to no one, but rather left to each to grab by his *human* powers. By this the mind was turned toward the acquisition of the human, which from then on beckoned to everyone, and there emerged a tendency which one hears so loudly complained about under the name of "materialism."

Communism seeks to block its course, by spreading the faith that what's human isn't worth so much trouble, and with a sensible arrangement, could be gained without the great expenditure of time and energy that seemed necessary up to now.

But for whom is time to be gained? Why does a human being need more time than is necessary to refresh his weary labor power? Here communism is silent.

Why? To take pleasure in himself as unique, after he has done his part as a human being!

In the first joy at being allowed to stretch out their hands toward everything human, people forgot to want anything else, and competed boldly for it, as if the possession of the human were the goal of all our desires.

They've run themselves to exhaustion, and are gradually realizing that "possession doesn't bring happiness." So they're thinking of getting what they need by an easier bargain, and spending only as much time and effort on it as its indispensability requires. Wealth declines in price, and a contented poverty, the carefree pauper, becomes the seductive ideal.

Should those human activities of which everyone thinks himself capable be highly paid, and sought with great effort and the expenditure of life forces? Even in the everyday expression: "If only I were the minister or even the ... , then it would go quite differently," that confidence is expressed that one holds himself capable of playing the role of such a dignitary; one no doubt senses that to things like that uniqueness doesn't belong, but only an education which is attainable, if still not exactly to all, at any rate to many, i.e., that for something like this one need only be an ordinary human being.

331 "*Freigegeben.*"
332 "*Gegeben.*"

If we suppose that, as *order*[333] belongs to the essence of the state, so too *subordination*[334] is based in its nature, then we see that the subordinates, or the favored, disproportionately *overcharge* and *overreach*[335] those who are pushed down. But the latter take courage, first from socialist perspectives, but later certainly with egoistic awareness, of which we will, therefore, immediately give their speech some coloring, for the question: by what is your property secured then, you favored ones?—and give themselves the answer: by this, that we refrain from encroachments! And so, by *our* protection! And what do you give us for it? Kicks and disdain are what you give to the "common people"; police surveillance and a catechism with the main clause: "Respect what is *not yours*, what belongs to *others!* Respect others and especially your superiors!" But we reply: "If you want our respect, then *buy* it for a price agreeable to us. We will leave you your property, if you give proper compensation for this leaving." Well then, what compensation does the general give in times of peace for the many thousands of his yearly income? What does another give for his sheer hundreds of thousands and millions each year? What compensation do you give for our chewing potatoes and looking on quietly while you slurp oysters? Just buy the oysters from us as dearly as we have to buy the potatoes from you, then you'll be allowed to go on eating them. Or do you think the oysters don't belong as much to us as to you? You'll cry out about *violence* if we help ourselves and consume them too, and you are right. Without violence, we don't get them, as you no less have them by doing violence to us.

But just take the oysters already, and leave us to consider our nearer property, labor (because the other is only possession). We slave away twelve hours a day in the sweat of our brow, and you offer us a few pennies for it. Then take the same for your labor too. Don't you like that? You imagine that our labor is richly paid with that wage, while yours, on the other hand, is worth a wage of many thousands. If you didn't make yours so high, and let us make better use of ours, we

333 "*Ordnung.*"

334 "*Unterordnung.*" In this passage, it seems that Stirner may be using the terms "subordination" and "subordinate" in a specific sense, relating to employment in state bureaucracies.

335 In the sense of *defrauding* someone.

would no doubt, where circumstance required it, bring about even more important things than you for the many thousands of dollars; and if you were only given wages like ours, you would soon be more diligent to get more. But if you do something that seems to us ten and a hundred times more valuable than our own labor, well then you'll also get a hundred times more for it; on the other hand, we also think to produce things for you, for which you will employ us at higher than the usual daily wage. We will come to terms with each other when we are agreed on this, that neither any longer needs to—*donate* to the other. Then we'll probably even go so far as to actually pay the cripple, the sick, and the elderly an appropriate price, so that they do not depart from us through hunger and want; since we want them to live, it also behooves us to—purchase the fulfillment of our will. I say "purchase," and therefore don't mean any wretched "alms." For their life is still the property of those who cannot work; if we desire (no matter for what reason) that they not withdraw their life from us, we are able to bring this about only through purchase; indeed, perhaps we will even want a life of luxury for them, maybe because we like having friendly faces around us. In short, we want nothing donated by you, but we will also donate nothing to you. For centuries, we have handed you alms out of good-hearted—stupidity, have doled out the mite of the poor, and given the masters what—isn't the masters'; now just open up your money bags, from now on our product rises quite enormously in price. We wish to take nothing, nothing at all from you, only you are to pay more for what you want to have. Well, what do you have? "I have an estate of a thousand acres." And I am your plowman and from now on will only work your fields for a thaler a day in wages. "Then I'll take another." You won't find any, because we plowmen no longer do otherwise, and if one comes forward who'll take less, then he'd better beware of us. There is the housemaid who now also demands as much, and you'll no longer find any below this price. "Well, then I'll go to ruin." Not so fast! You'll probably take in as much as we do; and if that isn't so, then we'll give up so much that you have enough to live like us. "But I'm accustomed to living better." We have nothing against that, but it's not our problem; if you have more to spare, it's all the same. Are we supposed to hire out below

rates, so that you can live in luxury? The rich man always puts off the poor man with the words: "What is your need to me? See to it, how you make your way through the world; that's *your affair,* not mine." Well now, let's let it be our affair then, and not let the rich pilfer from us the means that we have for utilizing ourselves. "But you uneducated people really don't need as much." Now, we're taking a bit more so that we can get the education that perhaps we do need. "But if you bring the rich down in this way, who then will still support the arts and sciences?" Oh, well, the crowd must do it; if we come together, that gives a nice little sum; and anyway, you rich now only buy the most insipid books and maudlin pictures of the Mother of God or a pair of nimble dancer's legs. "Oh, ill-fated equality!" No, my dear old man, we care nothing for equality. We only want to count for what we are worth; if you're worth more, then you will, after all, also count for more. We only want our money's worth, and think to show ourselves worthy of what you will pay.

Can the state perhaps awaken such confident courage and such strong self-esteem in the servant? Can it make a human being feel himself; can it even just allow itself to set this goal for itself? Can it want the individual to recognize his worth[336] and to utilize[337] it? Let's keep the two parts of the double question separate, and see first whether the state could bring such a thing about. Since the unanimity of the plowmen is required, only this unanimity can bring it about, and a state law would be bypassed in a thousand ways through competition and in secret. But can the state tolerate it? The state can't possibly tolerate people suffering coercion from any other than itself; it, therefore, couldn't concede the self-help of the unanimous plowmen against those who wanted to hire themselves out for lower wages. Let's suppose, however, that the state made the law, and all the plowmen were in agreement with it; could the state then tolerate it?

In isolated cases, yes; but the isolated case is more than that; it is a *matter of principle.* It is, furthermore, about the full embodiment of *self-utilization of the I,* and so also of his self-esteem *against* the state. The communists go along this far; but as self-utilization necessarily

336 "*Wert.*"
337 "*Verwerten.*"

directs itself against the state, it does so also against *society*, and thus reaches out beyond the commune and the communistic—from egoism.

Communism makes the principle of the bourgeoisie, that everyone is a holder ("property owner"), into an irrefutable truth, into an actuality, in that now the worry about *acquiring* ceases and everyone *has* what he needs from the start. In his labor power he *has* his capacity, and if he doesn't make any use of it, that's his fault. The snatching and hustling comes to an end, and no competition remains, as happens so often now, without success, because with every stirring of labor a sufficient supply of what's needed is brought into the house. Only now is a person *an actual holder*, because what he has in his labor is a power that can no longer escape from him, as it threatened to slip away at any moment under the economy of competition. He is a *care-free* and secure holder. And he is precisely this, because he no longer looks for his capacity in a product, but in his own labor, in his capacity for labor, thus because he is a pauper, a person of only ideal wealth. *I*, however, cannot be satisfied with the little I can afford through my capability for labor, because my capability doesn't consist merely of my labor.

Through labor, I can perform the official functions of a president, a minister, etc.; these positions require only a general education, namely, the kind of education that is generally attainable (because general education isn't merely that which everyone has attained, but broadly that which everyone can attain, thus, all specialized education, such as medical, military, philological education, which no "educated person" believes to be beyond his powers), or, broadly, only a skill possible to all.

But even if everyone can hold these offices, still only the individual's unique force, which is solely his own, gives them, so to speak, life and meaning. That he doesn't administer his office like an "ordinary person," but adds the capabilities of his uniqueness, he is not yet paid for this when he is generally only paid as an official or a minister. If he's done this to get your thanks, and you want to preserve this thanks-worthy force of the unique, you can't pay him as a mere human being who performed only human things, but as one who accomplishes the unique. Do the same with your labor!

It isn't possible to determine a universal valuation of my uniqueness, as it is for what I do as a human being. Only for the latter can a valuation be determined.

Go on then and set a general estimation for human labors, but don't rob your uniqueness of its deserts.

Human or *universal* needs can be satisfied through society; for the satisfaction of *unique* needs, you have to do some searching. Society can't provide you with a friend and some friendly service, or even an individual's service. And yet, in any moment, you will be in need of such service, and on the slightest occasions need someone who is helpful to you. Therefore, you don't rely on society, but see to it that you have the means to—purchase the fulfillment of your wishes.

Should money be maintained among egoists?—An inherited possession is attached to the old stamp. If you no longer let yourself be paid with it, then it's ruined; if you do nothing for this money, then it loses all power. Write off the *inheritance,* and you've broken off the executor's court seal. Now, indeed, everything is an inheritance, whether it is already inherited or still waits for its heir. If it is yours, why do you let it be sealed up from you, why do you respect the seal?

But why shouldn't you create new money? Do you abolish the product by taking away its hereditary stamp? Now, money is a product, and an essential *means* or capability, because it protects against the ossification of wealth,[338] keeps it in flux, and brings about its turnover. If you know a better medium of exchange, well, all right; but it will again be a "money." It's not the money that does you harm, but your inability to take it. Let your capability take effect, pull yourself together, and there'll be no lack of money—your money, money of *your* stamp. But I don't call working "letting your capability take effect." Those who are only "looking for work" or "are willing to work hard" prepare for themselves the inevitable—lack of work.

Fortune and misfortune depend upon money. It is therefore a power in the bourgeois period, because it is only wooed like a girl who is indissolubly wedded by nobody. All the romance and chivalry of wooing a dear object come to life again in competition. The "knights

338 "*Vermögen*"; also "capability," as in the previous sentence.

of industry"[339] run off with money, an object of desire.

The lucky one brings the bride home. The pauper is lucky; he brings her into his household, "society," and destroys the virgin. In his house, she is no longer bride, but wife, and with her virginity her family name is also lost. As a housewife, the maiden Money is called "Labor," because "Labor" is her husband's name.

To bring this image to an end, the child of Labor and Money is again a girl, an unmarried one and therefore Money, but with a certain lineage from Labor, her father. The shape of the face, the "image," bears a different stamp.

Finally, once again concerning competition, it has a continued existence precisely through this: that not all look after *their own affair* and come to an *understanding* with each other over it. Bread, for example, is a need of all the inhabitants of a city; therefore they could easily agree to set up a public bakery. Instead they leave the provision of what's needed to competing bakers. In the same way, meat to the butchers, wine to the winemakers, etc.

Abolishing competition is not the same thing as favoring the guild. The difference is this: In the *guild,* baking is the affair of the guild-brothers; in *competition* the affair of random rivals; in the association, of those who need baked goods, and therefore my affair, your affair, not the affair either of guild or licensed bakers, but the affair of the associates.

If *I* don't concern myself with *my* affair, then I have to be content with what it pleases others to grant me. Having bread is my affair, my wish, and my desire, and yet people leave it to the bakers, and hope at most through their wrangling, their jockeying for position, their rivalry—in short, their competition—to gain an advantage which one could not count on with the guild-brothers who were completely and solely in ownership of the baking franchise. What everyone needs, everyone should also take part in procuring and producing; it is *his* affair, his property, not the property of the guild or concession master.

Let's look back again. The world belongs to the children of this world, human children; it is no longer God's world, but the human

339 The literal translation of "*Industrierittern,*" which is a somewhat archaic term for a swindler or fraudulent speculator.

world. As much as each human being can get of it, let him call his own; but the true human being, the state, human society or humanity will see to it that each makes nothing else his own except what he appropriates as a human being, i.e., in a human way. Inhuman appropriation is that which human beings don't allow, i.e., it is a "criminal" appropriation, just as human appropriation is conversely a "lawful" one, one acquired in the "legal way."

So people speak since the revolution.

But my property is not a thing, as this has an existence independent of me; only my power is my own. Not this tree, but my power over it or my capability to dispose of it, is what is mine.

Now, how does one express this power in a wrong way? People say I have a *right* to this tree, or it is my *rightful* property. So I've *gained* it through power. That the power must persist so that the tree may also be *held*, or better, that the power is not a thing existing in itself, but has existence only in the *powerful I,* in me, the powerful one, is forgotten. Power, like my other *characteristics,* such as humanity, majesty, etc., is elevated to something existing in itself, so that it still exists long after it has ceased to be *my* power. Thus turned into a ghost, power is—*right.* This immortalized power doesn't even expire with my death, but rather is transferred or "bequeathed."

Things now actually don't belong to me, but to right.

On the other hand, this is nothing more than a delusion. Because the individual's power becomes permanent and a right only by others combining their power with his. The delusion lies in their believing that they can't withdraw their power again. Again, the same phenomenon, that the power is separated from me. I can't take back the power that I have given to the possessor. One has "invested power," has given away his power, has renounced thinking better of it.

A property owner can give up his power and his right to a thing by giving it away, squandering it, and the like. And couldn't we likewise let go of the power that we lend to him?

The upright person, the *righteous*[340] person, desires to call nothing

340 "*Gerechte*" would more often be translated as just or fair, but throughout this brief paragraph Stirner is playing on word derived from "*Recht*" ("right" or "law"), and "righteous" fits with this wordplay.

his own that he does not have "by right" or have the right to, thus only *rightful property*.

Who is to be the judge and grant him his right? In the end, really, the human being, who grants him human rights: then he can say, in an infinitely broader sense than Terence[341], "*humani nihil a me alienum puto,*" i.e., *the human is my property*. Do what he will, from this standpoint, he won't get away from a judge, and in our time the various judges that had been chosen have set themselves against each other in two persons who are mortal enemies, namely in God and humanity. The one appeals to divine right, the other to human right or the rights of humanity.

This much is clear: that in neither case does the individual entitle himself.

Seek out for me an action that today would not be a violation of right! At every moment the one side tramples human rights underfoot, while the opposing side can't open its mouth without bringing forth a blasphemy against divine right. Give alms, then you mock human rights, because the relationship between the beggar and the benefactor is an inhuman one; utter a doubt, then you sin against divine right. Eat dry bread with satisfaction, then you violate human rights with your equanimity; eat it with dissatisfaction, then you revile divine right with your reluctance. There's not one among you who doesn't commit a crime at every moment; your speeches are crimes, and every inhibition of your freedom of speech is no less a crime. You are altogether criminals!

But you are so only because you all stand on the *ground of right*, i.e., because you don't even know, and understand how to value, the fact that you are criminals.

Inviolable or *sacred* property has grown on this very ground: it is a *legal concept*.

A dog sees the bone in another's power and stands off only if it feels

341 Terence was a Roman playwright who came to Rome as a slave. His master freed him. In his play *Heuton timorumenos* (*Self-tormentors*), this line is found: "*Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*"—"I am human; nothing human is alien to me." Feuerbach said of this line: "...this sentence, taken in its *universal* and *highest meaning,* is the *motto* of the *new philosophy.*" (*Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* § 55).

too weak. But the human being respects the other's *right* to his bone. The latter action is thus considered as *human,* the former as *brutal* or "egoistic."

And as here, so generally it is called "human" when one sees something spiritual in everything (here the right), i.e., makes everything into a ghost, and acts toward it as toward a ghost, which one can indeed scare away at its appearance, but cannot kill. It is human to look at what is individual not as individual, but as universal.

In nature, as such, I no longer respect anything, but know that I am entitled to everything against it; on the other hand, in the tree in that garden, I must respect *alienness* (one-sidedly, people say "property"), I must keep my hands off it. That comes to an end only when I can indeed leave that tree to another as I leave my stick, etc., to another, but don't regard it, from the beginning, as alien to me, i.e., sacred. In fact, I don't make it a crime for myself to fell it if I want to, and it remains my property, however long I relinquish it to others; it is and remains *mine.* In the banker's wealth I as little see anything alien as Napoleon did in the territories of the kings; we have no *fear* of "*conquering*" it, and look about us for the means for doing so. Thus, we strip from it the *spirit* of *alienness,* of which we had been afraid.

Therefore, it is necessary that I no longer lay claim to anything as *human being,* but to everything as I, this *I;* therefore, to nothing human, but rather to mine; that is, nothing that comes to me as a human being, but—what I want and because I want it.

The rightful, or legitimate, property of another will only be that which *you* consider it right to be his property. If it stops being right to you, then it has lost its legitimacy for you, and you will laugh at the absolute right to it.

In addition to the previously discussed property in the narrow sense, another property is held up to our reverent minds, a property against which we "should sin" much less. This property consists in spiritual goods, in the "sanctuary of the inner being." What a person holds sacred, no one else should poke fun at; because, however false it may be, and however fervently you may seek "in a loving and modest way" to convince the one who holds to it and believes in it of a true sacred thing, still *the sacred* itself is always to be honored in his error: the

erring one still believes in the sacred, even though in an incorrect sense, and so one must at least respect his belief in the sacred.

In ruder times than our own, people used to cultivate a particular faith and require devotion to a particular sacred thing, and they didn't go easy on those of a different faith; however, since "freedom of belief" became more and more widespread, the "jealous God and sole Lord" gradually melted into a fairly universal "supreme being," and it satisfied human tolerance if everyone honored "something sacred."

Brought to the most human expression, this sacred thing is "the human being itself" and what is "human." With the deceptive appearance, as if the human were entirely our own and free from all the otherworldliness with which the divine is tainted, indeed as if the human being were as valuable as you or I, the proud delusion may arise that the words are no longer about a "sacred thing" and that we now feel ourselves at home[342] everywhere and no longer in the unearthly realm,[343] i.e., in the sacred and in sacred awe: in the raptures over "humanity discovered at last" the egoistic cry of pain gets ignored, and the phantasm that had become so familiar gets taken for our true *I*.

But "Humanus is the saint's name" (see Goethe),[344] and the humane is only the most refined sanctity.

The egoist says just the opposite. Precisely because you hold something sacred, I poke fun at you, and, even if I respected everything else about you, your sanctuary is precisely what I would not respect.

With these opposing views, one must also assume there is a contradictory attitude toward spiritual goods: the egoist insults them, while the religious person (i.e., everyone who places his "essence" above himself) must consistently—protect them. But which kind of spiritual goods are supposed to be protected, and which left unprotected, depends entirely on the concept one forms of the "supreme being"; and the one who reveres God, for example, has more to protect than the one who reveres humanity (the liberal).

342 "*Heimisch.*"

343 "*Unheimlichen.*"

344 Stirner is referring to line 245 of Goethe's unfinished religious epic poem *Die Geheimnisse,* written in 1789. In this poem, "Humanus" presides over a mysterious brotherhood of twelve knights.

In spiritual goods we are injured in a spiritual, as distinct from a sensory, way, and the sin against them consists in a direct *desecration*, whereas against a sensory good a theft or alienation takes place: the spiritual goods themselves are devalued and desecrated, not merely taken away; the sacred is immediately threatened. The words "irreverence" and "impudence" refer to everything a person can commit as a *crime* against spiritual goods, i.e., against all that is sacred for us; and mockery, insult, contempt, doubt, and the like are only different shades of criminal impudence.

That desecration can be practiced in the most varied way will be passed over here, and by preference only the desecration which threatens the sacred with danger through an *unrestricted press* will be mentioned.

As long as respect is demanded even for one spiritual essence, speech and the press must be enslaved in the name of this essence; for just so long the egoist could "violate" it by his *comments*, a thing which one must prevent him from doing at least through "due punishment," if one would rather not take up the more correct remedy against it, preventative police power, such as censorship.

What a sighing for freedom of the press! What then is the press supposed to be freed from? Surely from any dependence, adherence,[345] and servitude! But to break oneself free of that is everyone's affair, and it can be assumed with certainty that if you have liberated yourself from servitude, that what you compose and write will also belong to you as your own, instead of having been thought and drawn up *in the service* of some power. What can a believer in Christ say and have printed, that would be freer from this belief in Christ than he himself is? When I cannot and am not allowed to write something, perhaps the immediate fault lies with *me*. As little as this seems to hit on the matter, so near, nonetheless, is the application found. Through a press-law I draw a boundary for my publications, or let one be drawn, beyond which wrong and its *punishment* follow. I myself *limit* myself.

If the press were to be free, nothing would be quite so important as its liberation from any constraints that would be put on it in the *name of the law*. And, so that it comes to this, I myself would have to

345 As to a party line.

have released myself from obedience to the law.

Of course, absolute freedom of the press, like every absolute freedom, is absurd. The press can become free of a great many things, but always only from what I am also free from. If we free ourselves from the sacred,[346] if we have become *unholy*[347] and *lawless*, our words will also become so.

As little as we can be released from every constraint in the world, so little can our writing be withdrawn from them. But as free as we are, so free can we also make it.

It must therefore become our *own*, instead of, as up to now, serving a phantasm.

People are still unclear about their call for freedom of the press. What they ostensibly demand is that the state should set the press free; but what they actually want, without knowing it themselves, is for the press to be free from the state, or rid of the state. The former is a *petition* to the state, the latter is an *insurrection against* the state. As a "request for a right," even as a serious demand for the right to a free press, it presumes the state to be the giver, and can only hope for a *gift*, an authorization, a top-down enforcement. It's possible, no doubt, that a state would act so senselessly as to grant the demanded gift; but you can bet everything that the recipients won't know how to use the gift as long as they regard the state as a truth: they will not violate this "sacred thing" and will call for a punitive press law against anyone who would dare to do this.

In a phrase, the press won't become free from what I am not free from.

With this do I perhaps show myself as an opponent of freedom of the press? On the contrary, I only maintain that you will never get it, if you want only this, freedom of the press, i.e., if you only aim at unrestricted permission. Just go on begging for this permission: you can wait forever for it, since there is no one in the world who can give it to you. So long as you want to get yourself authorized for the use of the press by permission, i.e., freedom of the press, you live in vain hope and complaint.

346 "*Heiligen.*"

347 "*Heillos.*" This word can be translated as "terrible," "hopeless," "awful," and the like, but also in informal usage as "unholy," and the latter seems to fit best with Stirner's obvious wordplay here, as well as the point he is making.

"Nonsense! You, who harbor such thoughts as stand in your book, can yourself unfortunately bring them to the public only through a lucky accident or by stealth; and still will you rail against one who goes on urging and badgering his own state until it gives the refused permission?" But an author addressed in this way would perhaps—since the impudence of such people goes far—answer as follows: "Ponder your words carefully! What do I do then to get the freedom of the press for my book? Do I ask for permission, or do I not rather, without any question of legality, look for a favorable opportunity and grasp it with a complete lack of consideration for the state and its needs? I—the terrifying word must be uttered—I cheat the state. Unaware, you do the same. From your tribunes, you persuade it that it must give up its sacredness and inviolability, it must expose itself to the attacks of writers, without needing, for that reason, to fear danger. But you deceive it, because its existence is done for as soon as it loses its remoteness. To *you*, indeed, it might readily allow the freedom of writing, as England has done; you are *state-believers* and incapable of writing against the state, however much you would like to reform it and 'remedy its defects'. But what if the opponents of the state made use of free speech and, with relentless reason, attacked church, state, morals, and everything 'sacred'? Then, in awful anxiety, you would be the first one to call the *September Laws*[348] into life. Too late, you would then regret the stupidity that earlier made you so ready to sweet-talk and beguile the state or the state-regime. —But I prove only two things by my act. This, for one: that the freedom of the press, always bound to 'favorable opportunities,' will therefore never be an absolute freedom; but secondly this: that whoever wants to enjoy it has to seek out and perhaps create the favorable opportunity, by which he asserts his *own advantage* against the state, and deems himself and his will as more than the state and every 'higher' power. Not in the state, but only against it, can freedom of the press be achieved; if it is to be established, it will not be obtained as the result of a *request* but as the act of an *insurrection*. Every request and

348 Repressive laws passed by the Chambers in France after a failed attempt on the life of King Louis-Philippe on July 28, 1835, imposing more stringent controls on the press and public forms of expression, making it illegal to contest the regime.

every petition for freedom of the press is already an insurrection, be it aware or unaware, which the philistine half-measure will not and cannot admit to itself, until, with a shrinking shudder, it sees this insurrection clearly and irrefutably in the outcome. Since in the beginning the requested freedom of the press certainly has a friendly and benevolent face, it is not inclined in the least to ever let the 'insolence of the press' come out; but gradually its heart hardens, and the implication wheedles its way in that, after all, a freedom is not a freedom if it remains in the *service* of the state, morality, or the law. Indeed, a freedom from the constraints of censorship is not yet a freedom from the constraints of the law. The press, once seized by the desire for freedom, wants to grow ever freer, until at last the writer says to himself: I am then only wholly free when I ask for nothing; but writing is free only when it is my *own*, dictated to me by no power, no authority, no belief, no fear; the press must not be free—that is too little—it must be *mine:—ownness of the press or property in the press*, that is what I will take for myself.

"Indeed, freedom of the press is only *permission of the press*, and the state never will and never can willingly permit me to crush it through the press.

"Now, in conclusion, to improve the language above, which is still hesitant due to the phrase 'freedom of the press,' let us rather put it like this: *freedom of the press*, the liberals' loud demand, is certainly possible in the state; indeed, it is possible only *in* the state, because it is a *permission*; consequently the permitter, the state, must not be lacking. But as a permission, it has its limits precisely in this state, which justifiably should permit no more than is compatible with itself and its welfare: it stipulates the limits of this freedom as the *law* of its existence and extension. That one state tolerates more than another is only a quantitative difference, which nonetheless, alone, lies at the heart of political liberals: they want in Germany, for example, only a 'more extensive, broader authorization of free speech.' The freedom of the press which they seek is an affair of the *people*, and until the people (the state) possesses it, I'm not allowed to make use of it. From the standpoint of property in the press, it goes otherwise. If my people wants to do without freedom of the press, I will seek out

a power or a trick in order to print; I get my permission to print only from—*myself* and my strength.

"If the press is *my own*, then I need the state's permission to use it as little as I request permission to blow my nose. The press is my *property* from that moment when for me, nothing any longer goes above me; because from this moment on, state, church, people, society, and the like, cease, because they owe their existence only to the contempt I have for myself, and they come to an end with the disappearance of this contempt: they exist only when they exist *above me*, only as *powers* and *power-holders*. Or can you imagine a state whose inhabitants all make nothing of it? It would as surely be a dream, a fictitious existence, like 'united Germany.'

"The press is my own as soon as I myself am my own, a self-owned individual: the world belongs to the egoist, because he belongs to no power in the world.

"With this my press could still be quite unfree, as at this moment. But the world is large, and one helps himself as well as he can. If I were willing to give up the property of my press, I could easily reach the point where I may everywhere get as much printed as my fingers produced. But since I want to assert my property, I necessarily have to pull a fast one on my enemies. 'Wouldn't you accept their permission if they gave it to you?' Certainly, with joy; because their permission would be proof that I've deceived them and set them on the road to ruin. I'm not concerned about their permission, but all the more for their stupidity and their defeat. I don't pursue their permission, as if I'd sweet-talked myself, like the political liberals, that we both, they and I, could get along with each other peacefully, side by side, indeed, probably even raise and support each other; but rather I pursue it to make them bleed to death, so that the permitters themselves finally cease. I act as a deliberate enemy, outsmarting them and *using* their imprudence.

"The press is *mine* when I acknowledge no *judge* whatever over its use except myself, i.e., when I no longer write what morality, religion, respect for state laws, and the like determine, but what I and my egoism decide!"

What response do you have for him now, he who gives you such an

impudent answer? —Perhaps we could pose the question most eloquently as follows: Whose is the press—the people's (state's), or mine? The political sorts on their side intend nothing more than to free the press from the personal and arbitrary interferences of those who hold power, without noticing that to be actually open to everybody, it would also have to be free from the laws, i.e., from the will of the people (the will of the state). They want to make it a "people's affair."

But having become the people's property, it is still far from being mine; rather it retains for me the subordinate meaning of a *permission*. The people acts as judge over my thoughts, for which it holds me accountable or responsible. Jurors, when their fixed ideas are attacked, have heads and hearts just as hard as the most bull-headed[349] despots and their slavish officials.

In *Die liberalen Bestrebung*[350] Edgar Bauer asserts that freedom of the press is impossible in the absolutist and the constitutional state, whereas in the "free state" it finds its place. "Here," the text says, "it is recognized that the individual, since he is no longer an individual but a member of a true and rational universality, has the right to express himself." So not the individual, but rather the "member" has freedom of the press. But if, for the purpose of getting freedom of the press, the individual must first give proof of his belief in the universal, in the people, if he doesn't have it through *his own power*, then it is a people's freedom, a freedom that is granted to him for the sake of his belief, his "membership." On the contrary, it is precisely as an individual that each one can avail himself of the freedom to express himself. But he doesn't have the "right"; that freedom is certainly not his "sacred right." He only has the power; but the power alone makes him the owner. I don't need any license for freedom of the press, don't need the consent of the people for it, don't need the "right" to it, nor any justification. Freedom of the press, like every other freedom, I also have to "take"; the people, "as the sole judge," cannot give it to me. It can put up with the freedom I take for myself, or fight against

349 The word "*stiersten*" would usually translate as "blankest" or "slackest," but that makes no sense here. The adjective is derived from the German noun, "Stier," which translates as "bull," so I concluded Stirner must have been playing on that.

350 ▸ Edgar Bauer, *Die liberalen Bestrebung in Deutschland* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), no. 2, pp. 91 ff. (See note 349.)

it; to give, bestow, or grant it, this it cannot do. I exercise it *despite* the people, purely as an individual; I fight hard for it against the people, my—enemy, and get it only when I actually fight the people for it, i.e., *take* it. But I take it, because it is my property.

Sander,[351] against whom E. Bauer speaks, claims freedom of the press "as the right and freedom of *citizens of the state*."[352] What does E. Bauer do differently? For him also it is only a right of the free *citizen*.

People also demand freedom of the press in the name of "universal human rights." Against this, the objection was established: Not every human being knows how to use it properly, because not every individual is truly a human being. No government ever refused it to *the* human being as such; but *the* human being writes nothing, because it is a ghost. It refused this freedom always only to *individuals*, and gave it to others, e.g., its organs. So if one wants to have it for all, then one has to assert outright that it is due to the individual, me, not to the human being or the individual insofar as he is a human being. Anything other than a human being (e.g., a beast) can, in any case, make no use of it. The French government, for example, does not deny freedom of the press as a human right, but demands from the individual a guarantee that he is actually a human being; because it grants freedom of the press not to the individual, but to the human being.

Precisely under the pretext that it was *not human*, they deprived me of what was mine! They left me what was human undiminished.

Freedom of the press can bring about only an *accountable* press; the *unaccountable* press comes out solely from property in the press.

For intercourse with human beings, among all who live religiously, a specific law is placed above all, one whose observance people probably forget at times, but whose value they never dare to deny; this is the law of—*love,* to which even those who seem to fight against its principle and hate its name have not yet been unfaithful; for they also still have love, indeed, they love more deeply and sublimely, they love "the human being and humanity."

If we formulate the meaning of this law, it will be something like

351 Adolf Sander, a member of the Baden legislature.

352 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

this: Every man must have a something that is more to him than himself. You're supposed to put your "private interest aside," if it is for the welfare of others, the good of the fatherland, the good of society, the common good, the good of humanity, the good cause, and the like! Fatherland, society, humanity, etc., must be more to you than yourself, and facing them, your "private interests" must step back; because you're not allowed—to be an egoist.

Love is a far-reaching religious demand, which is not limited, for instance, to the love of God and the human being, but is on top in every respect. Whatever we do, think, want, the reason for it is always supposed to be love. So we may indeed judge, but only "with love." The Bible may certainly be criticized and really quite thoroughly, but above all else the critic must love it and see in it the sacred book. Does this mean anything else than that he isn't allowed to criticize it to death, he must leave it standing, and indeed as a sacred and irrefutable thing?—Also in our criticism of human beings, love is to remain the unchanged root. Certainly, judgments that hatred inspires are not our *own* judgments, but judgments of the hatred that rules us, "spiteful judgments." But are judgments that love inspires in us any more our *own?* They are judgments of the love that rules us, "loving, forgiving" judgments, not our *own,* and so not actual judgments at all. The one who burns with love for justice cries *fiat iustitia, pereat mundus!* He can certainly ask and delve into what true justice is or demands and in what it consists, but not *if* it is anything.

It is quite true: "He who abides in love abides in God and God in him."[353] God abides in him, he hasn't gotten rid of God, hasn't become godless; and he abides in God, doesn't come to himself and into his own home, abides in the love of God and hasn't become loveless.

"God is love! All times and all generations recognize in these words the center of Christianity." God, who is love, is a meddlesome god: he cannot leave the world in peace, but wants to *bless* it. "God became a human being to make human beings divine."[354] He has his hand

353 ▸ I John 4:16.

354 ▸ Athanasius, an early Christian theologian best known for his opposition to Arianism, a doctrine that denied the divinity of Jesus.

in play everywhere, and nothing happens without it; everywhere he has his "best intentions," his "incomprehensible plans and decrees." Reason, which he himself is, should also be advanced and realized throughout the world. His fatherly care deprives us of all independence. We can do nothing sensible without someone saying *God did that!* and can draw no misfortune to ourselves without hearing *God imposed that*; we have nothing that we don't have from him; he "gave" everything. But as God does, so does the human being. God absolutely wants to *bless* the world, and the human being wants to *make it happy*, wants to make all human beings *happy*. Therefore, every "human being" wants to awaken the reason, which he considers himself to have, in all. Everything should be absolutely rational. God torments himself with the devil; the philosopher does it with unreason and the accidental. God lets no being go *its own* way, and the human being likewise wants to let us lead only a human way of life.

But whoever is full of sacred (religious, moral, humane) love loves only the phantasm, the "true human being," and persecutes with dull relentlessness the individual, the actual human being, under the phlegmatic legal title of proceedings against the "inhuman monster." He finds it laudable and indispensable to practice ruthlessness in the harshest measure; because love of the phantasm or the universal commands him to hate the unghostly, i.e., the egoist or individual; that is the meaning of the famous love-phenomenon that people call "justice."

The embarrassed defendant can expect no mercy, and no one kindly spreads a cloth over his unhappy nakedness. Without emotion the strict judge strips the last rags of excuse from the body of the poor accused one; without compassion the jailer drags him into his gloomy dwelling; without forgiveness, when the time of punishment ends, the jailer thrusts the stigmatized one back out among human beings who spit on him with contempt, his good, loyal, Christian brethren. Yes, without mercy, a criminal "deserving of death" is led to the scaffold, and before the eyes of the cheering crowd the compensated moral law celebrates its sublime—revenge. Only one can live, the moral law or the criminal. Where criminals live with impunity, the moral law has gone under, and where the moral law prevails, the criminals must fall. Their enmity is indestructible.

The Christian age is precisely that of *mercy*, *love,* concern for letting people get what is due to them, indeed, for bringing them to where they fulfill their human (divine) calling. Therefore, for intercourse people have put this first: this and this is the essence of the human being and consequently his calling, to which either God has called him, or (according to today's concepts) his being human (the species) calls him. From this comes the zeal for proselytizing. That the communists and the humane expect more from human beings than the Christians doesn't take away from this standpoint in the least. The human being should get what is human! If for the pious it was enough that the divine became his part, the humane require that what is human will not wither away in him. Both take a stand against what is egoistic. Of course—because the egoistic cannot be granted or conferred to him (a fief); rather he must get hold of it for himself. Love grants the former; only I can give myself the latter.

Up to now, intercourse was based on love, *considerate* behavior, doing for each other. As a person owed it to himself to make himself blessed or to take up into himself blessedness, the supreme essence, and bring it to a *vérité* (a truth and actuality), so one owes it to others to help them realize their essence and calling: in both cases, one owed it to the human essence to contribute to its realization.

But one owes it neither to himself to make anything out of himself, not to others to make anything out of them; because he owes nothing to his or anyone else's essence. Intercourse based on essence is an intercourse with a phantasm, not with any actual thing. If I hold intercourse with the highest essence, then I don't hold intercourse with myself, and if I hold intercourse with the human essence, then I don't hold intercourse with human beings.

The natural human being's love becomes through education a *commandment.* But as a commandment it belongs to *the* human being as such, not to *me;* it is my *essence,*[355] about which people make so much fuss,[356] not my property. *The* human being, i.e., humanity, places this requirement on me; love is *required,* it is my *duty.* So instead of actually being gained by *me,* it is gained by the universal, *the* human being,

355 "*Wesen.*"

356 "*Von dem man viel* ***Wesens*** *macht.*" Emphasis added to show the wordplay.

as his property or ownness: "It behooves the human being, every human being, to love; love is the human being's duty and calling," etc.

Consequently, I must again claim love for *myself*, and rescue it from the power of *the* human being.

What was originally *mine*, but *by chance,* instinctively, was conferred to me as the property of the human being; I became a fief-holder when I loved, I became the vassal of humanity, only a specimen of this species, and in loving acted not as *I,* but as a *human,* as a specimen of the human being, i.e., humanly. The whole condition of civilization is the *feudal system,* property being *the* human being's or humanity's, not *mine*. A vast feudal state was founded, the individual robbed of everything, everything left to "the human being." The individual finally had to appear as "a sinner through and through."

Am I perhaps to have no lively interest in the person of another, should *his* joys and *his* well-being not lie at my heart, should the enjoyment that I prepare for him not be more to me than other enjoyments of my own? On the contrary, I can sacrifice numberless enjoyments to him with joy, I can deny myself countless things to heighten *his* pleasure, and I can risk for him what would be dearest to me without him, my life, my welfare, my freedom. Indeed, it forms my pleasure and happiness to feast on his pleasure and happiness. But *me, myself,* I do not sacrifice to him, but rather remain an egoist and—enjoy him. If I sacrifice to him everything I would keep without my love for him, that is very easy, and even more commonplace in life than it seems to be; but it proves nothing more than that this one passion in me is more powerful than all the rest. Christianity also teaches to sacrifice all other passions to this one. But if I sacrifice others to one passion, I still do not, for this reason, sacrifice *myself,* and sacrifice nothing through which I truly am myself; I do not sacrifice my particular[357] worth, my *ownness*. Where this nasty incident occurs, love looks no better than any other passion that I blindly obey. The ambitious person, who is swept away by ambition and remains deaf to every warning that a quiet moment engenders in him, has let this passion grow into a tyrant

357 The German word here is "*eigentlich*," which usually translates as "real," "actual," or something similar, but in this context Stirner seems to be using it more as a play on "*Eigenheit*" ("ownness," "peculiarity," thus also, "particularity").

against which he gives up all power of breaking off: he has given up himself, because he cannot *break off,* and therefore cannot release himself from the passion: he is possessed.

I also love human beings, not just a few individuals,[358] but every one. But I love them with the awareness of egoism; I love them because love makes *me* happy, I love because love is natural to me, it pleases me. I know no "commandment of love." I have *fellow-feeling* with every feeling being, and their torment torments me, their refreshment refreshes me too; I can kill, not torture, them. In contrast, the high-minded, virtuous philistine prince Rudolph in *The Mysteries of Paris*[359] plots the torture of the wicked, because they "enrage" him. That fellow-feeling only proves that the feeling of those who feel is also mine, my property; in contrast to which the relentless practices of the "righteous" person (for example, against the notary Ferrand[360]) resembles the lack of feeling of that robber who cut off or stretched his prisoners' legs to the measure of his bedstead[361]: Rudolph's bedstead, to whose measure he cut human beings, is the concept of the "good." The feeling for right, virtue, etc., makes one hard-hearted and intolerant. Rudolph doesn't feel as the notary feels, but contrarily feels that "it serves the rascal right"; this is not fellow-feeling.

You love the human being, therefore you torture the individual human being, the egoist; your love of humanity[362] is the tormenting of human beings.

If I see the beloved suffering, I suffer with him, and I find no rest until I've tried everything to comfort and cheer him; if I see him joyful, I too become joyful over his joy. It doesn't follow from this

358 Here Stirner uses the adjective form "*einzelne.*" As a noun, "*Einzelne*" is translated as "individual." As an adjective, it can also be translated as "some" or "a few." I decided to translate it as "a few individuals" in order to emphasize the distinction Stirner is making between loving only a few and loving every human being while also keeping the relationship of the adjective to the noun clear.

359 *Les mystères de Paris* is a novel by Eugène Sue published in 1842-43 about the Parisian underworld. Stirner's review of this book can be found in an English translation by Lawrence Stepelevich in *Modern Slavery*, #3, pp. 172-179.

360 Ferrand is one of the characters who suffers Prince Rudolph's wrath in *Les mystères de Paris.*

361 A reference to Procrustes from ancient Greek mythology.

362 "*Menschenliebe*" can also be translated as "humanitarianism," "philanthropy," or "charity."

that the same thing causes suffering or joy in me, as that which brings about these effects in him, as any bodily pain sufficiently proves, since I don't feel it as he does; his tooth gives him pain, but his pain gives me pain.

But because *I* cannot bear the sorrowful crease on the beloved forehead, therefore, then for my sake, I kiss it away. If I didn't love this person, he could go right on creasing his forehead, that wouldn't trouble me; I'm only driving away *my* troubles.

Now, how does anyone or anything that I do not love, have a right to be loved by me? Is my love first or is his right first? Parents, relatives, fatherland, people, hometown, etc., and finally fellow human beings in general ("brothers, brotherhood") claim to have a right to my love and lay claim to it without further ado. They look upon it as *their property,* and upon me, if I don't respect it, as a robber who deprives them of what is due to them and is theirs. I *am supposed to* love. If love is a commandment and a law, then I must be educated for it, trained in it, and if I violate it, punished. People will therefore exercise the strongest "moral influence" possible on me, to bring me to love. And there's no doubt that one can titillate and seduce human beings to love as to other passions, for example, to hatred as well. Hatred runs through whole generations simply because the ancestors of one belonged to the Guelphs, those of the other to the Ghibellines.[363]

But love is not a commandment, but rather, like each of my feelings, *my property*. Acquire, i.e., purchase, my property, and then I will give it up to you. I don't need to love a church, a people, a fatherland, a family, etc., that don't know how to acquire my love, and I set the purchase price of my love thoroughly to my pleasure.

Selfish love is very far from unselfish, mystical, or romantic[364] love. One can love every possible thing, not just human beings, but any

363 The Ghibellines and the Guelphs were traditionally viewed as the two divisions in medieval Italian politics, characterized by a pro-imperial and an anti-imperial tradition respectively. The type of hatred Stirner is talking about here resembles that of the feuding Hatfields and McCoys, the legendary rivalry of Appalachian American families.

364 Throughout this passage, Stirner is using the term "romantic" in relation to the movement of romanticism, not in the sense that most of us now understand it. Thus, in Germany at that time, a certain type of "love of the fatherland," for example, would be "romantic love."

"object" at all (wine, one's fatherland, etc.). Love becomes blind and crazy through a *must* taking it out of my power (infatuation), romantic through a *should* entering into it, i.e., through the "object" becoming sacred to me, or through me becoming bound to it by duty, conscience, oath. Now the object is no longer there for me, but I for it.

Love is a case of being possessed, not as my feeling—as such I prefer to keep them in my possession as property—but through the alienness of the object. Thus, religious love consists precisely in the commandment to love the "sacred one" in the beloved, or to cling to a sacred one; for unselfish love, there are *absolutely lovable* objects for which my heart is supposed to beat, for example, fellow human beings, or the spouse, relatives, etc. Sacred love loves the sacred in the beloved, and therefore also strives more and more to make the beloved into a sacred being (for example a "human being").

The beloved is an object that I *should* love. He is not on object of my love on account of, because of, or through my loving him, but is an object of love in and of himself. I do not make him into an object of love, but rather he is inherently such; because that he has become so by my choice, as bride, spouse, and the like, doesn't matter here, since also then, as the one once chosen, he has obtained forever a "right of his own to my love," and I, because I have loved him, am obligated to love him for eternity. So he is not an object of *my* love, but of love in general: an object that *should* be loved. Love is fitting for him, is due to him, or is his *right,* but I am *obligated* to love him. My love, i.e., the love that I pay him as tribute, is in truth *his* love, which he only collects from me as tribute.

Every love to which even the smallest fleck of obligation clings is an unselfish love, and, as far as this fleck reaches, is a case of being possessed. Whoever believes that he *owes* the object of his love something loves romantically or religiously.

For example, family love, as it is usually understood as "filial piety," is a religious love; love of the fatherland, preached as "patriotism," likewise. All our romantic love moves in the same pattern; everywhere the hypocrisy, or rather the self-deception, of an "unselfish love," an interest in the object for the object's sake and not for my sake and mine alone.

Religious or romantic love is distinguished from sensual love certainly by the difference of the object, but not by the dependence of the relationship to it. In the latter respect, both are cases of being possessed; but in the former regard, one of the objects is profane, the other sacred. The domination of the objects over me is in both cases the same, except that in one instance it is a sensuous one, in the other instance a spiritual (ghostly) one. My love is my own only when it consists altogether in a selfish and egoistic interest, and so the object of my love is actually *my* object or my property. I owe my property nothing and have no obligation to it, as little as I have an obligation to my eye; if I still tend it with the greatest care, I do so for my sake.

Antiquity lacked love as little as the Christian era; the love god is older than the God of Love. But the condition of being mystically possessed belongs to the moderns.

The condition of being possessed by love lies in the alienation of the object, or in my powerlessness against its alienation and superior power. For the egoist, nothing is so high that he would humble himself before it, nothing so independent that he would live for the love of it, nothing so sacred that he would sacrifice himself to it. The egoist's love wells up from selfishness, flows in a bed of selfishness, and empties back into selfishness.

Can this still be called love? If you know another word for it, go ahead and choose it; then the sweet word love may wither with the dead world; for now, I at least find none in our *Christian* language, and therefore stick with the old sound and "love" *my* object, my—property.

Only as one of my feelings do I cherish love, but as a power over me, as a divine power (Feuerbach), as a passion that I should not avoid, as a religious or moral duty—I despise it. As my feeling, it is *mine;* as a principle to which I dedicate and "give over"[365] my soul, it is a master and *divine*, just as hatred as a principle is *diabolical:* the one no better than the other. In short, egoistic love, i.e., my love, is neither holy nor unholy, neither divine nor diabolical.

365 *"Verschwören"* can be translated as "to give over" oneself, one's soul, and the like to something, but it can also translate as "to conspire, to plot," and since Stirner put it in quotation marks, I suspect he is making a word play here: if one gives himself over to love as a principle, he is conspiring with love against himself.

"A love that is limited by faith is an untrue love. The sole limitation that does not contradict the essence of love is the self-limitation of love by reason, by intelligence. Love that disdains the rigor, the law, of intelligence, is theoretically a false, and practically a ruinous, love."[366] So love is in its essence *rational!* So thinks Feuerbach; the believer, on the contrary, thinks that love is in its essence *believing*.[367] The former rails against *irrational,* the latter against *unbelieving,* love. For both, it can at most count as a *splendidum vitium.*[368] Don't both allow love to exist, even in the form of unreason and unbelief? They dare not say, irrational or unbelieving love is nonsense, is not love; as little as they want to say: irrational or unbelieving tears are not tears. But if even irrational, etc., love must count as love, and if they are nevertheless supposed to be unworthy of the human being, then this simply follows: Love is not the highest thing, but rather reason or faith; even the unreasonable and the unbelieving person can love; but love only has worth when it is that of a rational or a believing person. It is an illusion when Feuerbach calls love's rationality its "self-limitation"; the believer could with equal right call faith its "self-limitation." Irrational love is neither false nor ruinous; it does its service as love.

Toward the world, and especially toward human beings, I am supposed to *assume a particular feeling,* and "meet them with love," with the feeling of love, right from the start. Admittedly, in this there is far more caprice and self-determination revealed than when I let the world assail me with all possible feelings, and remain exposed to the most muddled and random impressions. I go to the world rather with a preconceived feeling, a prejudice as it were and a preconceived opinion; I have determined my behavior toward it in advance, and, despite all its challenges, feel and think about it only as I have once determined to feel. I safeguard myself against the world's domination through the principle of love; for, come what may, I—love. The ugly, for example, makes a disgusting impression on me; but, determined to love, I master this impression, as with any antipathy.

366 ▸ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 394.

367 The German word "*gläubig*" carries religious implications and can also be translated as "devout" or "religious." The implication here is that it is a matter of *faith* as opposed to reason.

368 That is, "a glorious vice."

But the feeling to which I have determined and—condemned[369] myself from the start is a *close-minded* feeling, because it is a predestined one from which I myself cannot get away or which I cannot renounce. Because it's preconceived, it is a *prejudice*.[370] I no longer reveal myself in front of the world, but rather my love reveals itself. Indeed, the *world* does not rule me, but so much the more inevitably the spirit of *love* rules me. I have overcome the world, to become the slave of this spirit.

If earlier I said, I love the world, now I add as well: I don't love it, because I *annihilate*[371] it, as I annihilate myself; *I break it up*. I don't limit myself to one feeling for human beings, but give free play to all of which I am capable. How should I not dare to express it in all its stridency? Yes, *I use* the world and human beings! In this way I can keep myself open to every impression without being torn away from myself by one of them. I can love, love with all my heart, and let the most consuming glow of passion burn in my heart, without taking the beloved for anything other than *nourishment* for my passion, on which it always refreshes itself anew. All my care for him counts only for the *object of my love*, only for him whom my love *needs*, only for him whom I "ardently love." How indifferent he would be to me without this—my love. I only feed my love with him, I *use* him only for this: I *enjoy* him.

Let's choose another obvious example. I see how people are frightened in dark superstition by a swarm of ghosts. If, in accordance with my strengths, I perhaps allow a bit of daylight to fall on the nocturnal phantasmagoria, is it because love for you inspires this in me? Do I write out of love for human beings? No, I write because I want to give *my* thoughts and existence in the world; and even if I foresaw that these thoughts would take away your rest and peace, even if I saw the bloodiest wars and the destruction of many generations sprouting from this seed of thought:—still I would scatter it. Do with it what

369 "*Verurteilt.*"

370 "*Vorurteil.*"

371 The word "*vernichten*" is usually translated as "annihilate" or "destroy," but in certain contexts can also be translated as "devour." Because of the playful care with which Stirner so often chooses his words, and because he relates loving to eating, the reader should keep this in mind here.

you will and can, that's your affair, and I don't care. You'll perhaps only have sorrow, struggle and death from it; a very few will draw joy from it. If your welfare lay at my heart, then I'd act like the church did, which withheld the Bible from the laity, or the Christian governments, which make it a sacred duty to "protect the common people from bad books."

But it's not only not for your sake, but also not for the truth's sake that I express what I think. No:

> *I sing as the bird sings*
> *That lives up in the tree;*
> *The song that from its throat springs*
> *Pays well for any fee.*[372]

I sing because—I am a singer. But I *use*[373] you for it, because I—need[374] ears.

When the world gets in my way—and it gets in my way everywhere—then I consume it to quiet the hunger of my egoism. You are nothing for me but—my food, just as I am also fed upon and consumed by you. We have only one relationship to each other, that of *usefulness,* usability, advantage. We owe *each other* nothing, because what I seem to owe to you, I owe at most to myself. If I show you a cheerful expression in order to likewise cheer you up, then your cheerfulness matters to me, and my expression serves *my* wish; I do not show it to thousands of others, whom I have no intention of cheering up.

One must be brought up into the love that is based on the "human essence" or, in the ecclesiastical and moral period, lies on us as a "commandment." In what way moral influence, the main ingredient of our upbringing, seeks to control human intercourse will be considered here with egoistic eyes in at least one example.

Those who bring us up take care early to cure us of lying and to impress on us the principle that one must always tell the truth. If they

372 Stirner's quotation is from the second to the last stanza of Goethe's "*Der Sänger,*" one of the *Harfenspeiler* in *Wilhelm Meister*, Book II, chapter 11.

373 "*Gebrauche.*"

374 "*Brauche.*"

made self-interest the basis for this rule, then everyone would readily understand how by lying he forfeits the confidence in him that he wants to awaken in others, and how correct the saying proves: No one believes a liar, even when he tells the truth. But at the same time, he would also feel that he had to meet with truth only those whom *he* has authorized to hear the truth. If a spy goes in disguise through the enemy camp and someone asks who he is, the questioners are certainly authorized to ask for his name, but the disguised man does not give them the right to learn the truth from him; he tells them what he wants, but not the correct thing. And yet morality demands: "You should not lie!" Morality entitles those people to expect the truth; but I do not entitle them to it, and I acknowledge only the right that *I* grant. The police forced their way into a meeting of revolutionaries and asked the speaker for his name; everyone knows that the police have the right to do this, but they don't have it from the *revolutionary*, because he is their enemy; he gives them a false name, and—lies to them. And the police also don't act so foolishly as to count on the veracity of their enemies; on the contrary, they don't believe without further details, but rather "investigate" the person questioned if they can. Indeed, the state proceeds everywhere without belief against persons, because in their egoism it recognizes its natural enemy; it demands without exception an ID card, and those who can't identify themselves fall prey to an investigative inquisition. The state does not believe or trust the individual, and so presents itself to him in the *code of behavior of lying*; it trusts me only when it has *convinced* itself of the truth of my statement, for which often no other means remains to it but the oath. How clearly this also proves that the state does not count on our veracity and credibility, but rather on our *interest*, our selfishness; it relies on our not wanting to have a falling-out with God over a perjury.

Now imagine a French revolutionary in 1788, who among friends would let fall the well-known phrase: "The world will have no peace until the last king is hanged with the guts of the last priest." At that time the king still had all the power, and when the statement is betrayed by an accident, but without anyone being able to produce witnesses, they demand a confession of the defendant. Should he confess

or not? If he denies, he lies and—is left unpunished; if he confesses, he is honest and—gets beheaded. If the truth is above all else for him, well then, he dies. Only a wretched poet could try to make a tragedy out of the end of his life; because what interest is there in seeing how a person succumbs from cowardice? But if he had the courage not to be a slave of truth and honesty, he would ask something like this: why do the judges need to know what I said among friends? If I'd *wanted* them to know it, then I would have said it to them, as I said it to my friends. I don't want them to know it. They force their way into my confidence when I haven't called them to it and made them my confidants; they *will* to learn what I *will* conceal. Well, come on then, you who will to break my will with your will, and try your arts. You can afflict me with torture, you can threaten me with hell and eternal damnation, you can wear me down so much that I make a false oath, but you shall not squeeze the truth out of me, since I *will* lie to you, because I have given you no claim and no right to my honesty. Let God, "who is truth," look down ever so threateningly upon me, let lying come ever so hard to me, still I have the courage of the lie; and even if I were tired of my life, even if nothing seemed more welcome to me than your executioner's sword, you still would not have the pleasure of finding me a slave of truth who through your priestly arts you've made a traitor to his *will*. When I spoke those treasonous words, I willed that you would know nothing about them; I hold to the same will now, and don't let the curse of the lie frighten me.

So Sigismund[375] is not a pathetic wretch because he broke his princely word, but rather he broke his word because he was a wretch; he could have kept his word and would still have been a wretch, a slave of the priests. Luther, driven by a higher power, was unfaithful to his monastic vow: he became so for God's sake. Both broke their oath as possessed people: Sigismund, because he wanted to appear as an *honest* adherent of the divine *truth*, that is of the true, genuinely

375 Kaiser Sigismund (1361-1437) was instrumental in calling the Council of Constance, which (among other things) was intended to deal with the alleged heresy of Jan Hus, a Czech precursor of Protestantism. Sigismund granted safe conduct to Jan Hus, but Hus was arrested, arraigned, condemned, and executed by burning. The extent of Sigismund's involvement in this is open to debate, but he did accept the death of Hus as preferable to the collapse of the Council.

Catholic faith; Luther, to bear witness to the gospel *honestly* and with all truth, with body and soul; both perjured themselves to be honest toward a "higher truth". It's just that the priests absolved the former, the latter absolved himself. What else did both comply with than what is contained in the apostolic words, "You have not lied to men, but to God"?[376] They lied to human beings, broke their oath in the eyes of the world, in order not to lie to God, but to serve him. So they show us a way that one is supposed hold to the truth before human beings. To God's glory and for God's sake, a—breach of oath, a lie, a prince's word broken!

Now how about if we changed things a bit and wrote: perjury and lying for—*my sake!* Wouldn't that be to recommend every despicable act? It certainly seems so, but in this it is altogether like the "for God's sake." Because hasn't every despicable act been committed for God's sake, all the scaffolds filled for his sake, all the *autos-da-fé* held for his sake, all the dulling of the mind introduced for his sake? And still today don't they bind the minds of tender children through religious education for God's sake? Didn't they break sacred vows for his sake, and don't missionaries and priests go out every day to get Jews, heathens, Protestants, or Catholics to betray the faith of their fathers—for his sake? And that's supposed to be worse with the "for my sake"? What then does *on my behalf* mean? Here people immediately think of *filthy profit.* But the one who acts from love of filthy profit indeed does it on his own behalf, since in any case there is nothing that one does not do for his own sake, among other things, everything done for the glory of God; but because he seeks profit, he is a slave of profit, not beyond profit; he is one who belongs to profit, to the moneybag, not to himself; he is not his own. Doesn't a person whom the passion of greed rules follow this *master's* orders, and if one time a weak good-naturedness creeps over him, doesn't this appear as an exceptional case of precisely the same sort as when devout believers are sometimes abandoned by their Lord's guidance and beguiled by the wiles of the "devil?" So a greedy person is not a self-owned person, but a slave, and he can do nothing for his own sake, without at the same time doing it for his master's sake—precisely like

376 Acts 5:4.

the God-fearing person.

The breach of oath that Francis I committed against Emperor Charles V is famous. It wasn't later, when he carefully considered his promise, but immediately, when he took the oath, that King Francis took it back in thought as well as through a secret protestation, documented and signed before his councilors; he uttered a premeditated perjury. Francis showed that he was not averse to buying his release, but the price that Charles set on it seemed too high and unreasonable to him. Although Charles behaved stingily when he sought to extort as much as possible, it was still shabby of Francis to want to barter for his freedom at a lower ransom; and his later actions, among which there occurs a second breaking of his word, sufficiently proves how the haggling spirit kept him enslaved and made him a shabby swindler. However, what should we say to the reproof of his perjury? In the first place, this again: that it wasn't the perjury, but his sleaziness, that shamed him; that he did not deserve contempt for his perjury, but rather made himself guilty of perjury because he was a contemptible human being. But Francis' perjury, considered in itself, demands another judgment. One could say that Francis did not live up to the trust that Charles put in him by releasing him. But if Charles had really granted him trust, he would have given him the price he considered the release worth, and then would have set Francis free and expected him to pay the ransom sum. Charles harbored no such trust, but believed only in Francis' powerlessness and gullibility, which would not allow him to act against his oath; but Francis deceived only this—gullible calculation. When Charles believed himself to be insured by an oath from his enemy, right there he freed him from any obligation. Charles had expected from the king a bit of stupidity, a narrow conscience, and, without trust in Francis, reckoned only on his stupidity, i.e., conscientiousness: he released him from the Madrid prison only to hold him more securely in the prison of conscientiousness, the huge jail cell built around the human mind by religion; he sent him back to France locked tightly in invisible chains—what wonder if Francis sought to escape and sawed off the chains? No human being could have held it against him if he had secretly fled from Madrid, since he was in an enemy's power;

but every good Christian cries woe upon him, that he also wanted to loose himself from God's bonds. (Only later did the pope absolve him from his oath.)

It is contemptible to deceive a trust that we voluntarily elicit; but it is no shame to egoism to let anyone who wants to get us in his power through an oath bleed to death at the failure of his untrusting tricks. If you've wanted to bind me, then learn that I know how to burst your bonds.

It all depends on whether *I* give the truster the right to this trust. When my friend's pursuer asks me where he has fled to, I would certainly put him on a false trail. Why does he ask precisely me, the friend of the pursued man? So as not to be a false, traitorous friend, I prefer to be false to the enemy. I could certainly with courageous conscience answer: I will not tell (so Fichte decides the case); in this way I would vindicate my love of truth and do for my friend pretty much—nothing, because if I don't mislead the enemy, he may accidentally take the right road, and my love of truth would have betrayed my friend, because it prevented me from the—courage[377] of lying. Anyone who has an idol, a sacred thing, in truth must *humble*[378] himself before it, may not defy its demands, may not resist courageously; in short, he must renounce the heroism[379] of the lie. Because no less courage belongs to the lie than to the truth: a courage that the young are most usually lacking in, since they would rather confess the truth and mount the scaffold for it than confound the enemy's power through the insolence of a lie. For them the truth is "sacred" and the sacred always demands blind reverence, submission, and self-sacrifice. If you are not insolent, not mockers of the sacred, you are tame and its servants. If someone puts a grain of truth in the trap for you, you certainly peck at it; they've caught the fools. You don't want to lie. Well, then, fall as sacrifices to the truth and become—martyrs! Martyrs—for what? For yourself, for ownness? No, for your goddess—the truth. You know only two kinds of *service,* only two kinds of servant: servants of the truth and servants of the lie.

377 "*Mute.*"
378 "*Demütigen.*"
379 "*Heldenmut.*"

Then in God's name serve the truth!

Still others also serve the truth, but they serve in "in moderation," and make, for example, a great distinction between an ordinary lie and a lie under oath. And still the whole chapter of the oath coincides with that of the lie, because an oath is, of course, only a strongly assured statement. Do you hold yourself to be entitled to lie, if only you still don't swear to it? A person who takes it seriously must judge and condemn a lie as harshly as a false oath. But now an ancient controversy in morality has been preserved that is customarily dealt with under the name of the "white lie."[380] No one who dares to speak up for this can consistently reject the "oath of necessity"[381] out of hand. If I justify my lie as a white lie, I shouldn't be so timid as to rob the justified lie of the strongest affirmation. Whatever I do, why shouldn't I do it completely and without reservations (*reservatio mentalis*[382])? Once I lie, then why not lie completely with my full awareness and all my strength? As a spy, I would have to swear to each of my false statements at the enemy's demand; determined to lie to him, should I suddenly become cowardly and indecisive when faced with an oath? Then I would have been ruined from the start as a liar and a spy, because I would voluntarily be handing the enemy a means to catch me.—The state also fears the oath of necessity, and therefore doesn't give the accused the chance to swear. But you do not justify the state's fear; you lie, but don't swear falsely. If you do someone a favor, without wanting him to know it, but he suspects it and tells you so to your face, you deny it; if he insists, you say, "Truthfully, I didn't!" If it came to swearing, then you would refuse, because, from fear of the sacred, you always stop halfway. You have no *will of your own, against* the sacred. You lie in—moderation, as you are free "in moderation," religious "in moderation" (the clergy aren't supposed to "encroach," as now the most insipid of controversies is being waged by

380 "*Notlüge,*" literally, a "lie out of necessity."

381 "*Noteid.*"

382 Apparently a reference to the doctrine of "mental reservation" in Roman Catholic moral theology, which deals with circumstances when the obligation to tell the truth comes into conflict with obligations to keep a confidence. As one might expect of theologians, this doctrine encourages what Stirner earlier described as lacking the "courage of the lie." Rather than lying, the individual—in the name of truth—resorts to ambiguity and mental qualifications.

the university against the church about this), monarchically-minded "in moderation" (you want a monarch limited by the constitution, by basic state law), everything nicely *tempered,* tepid and dull, half God's, half the devil's.

There was a university where the prevailing code of conduct was that the students would consider every word of honor that had to be given to the university judge as null and void. To be exact, the students saw in the demand for this nothing but a snare that they couldn't escape except by depriving it of all significance. At that same place, anyone who broke his word of honor to a fellow student was infamous; anyone who gave it to the university judge was laughed at along with any other students who were so deluded they imagined that a word had has the same worth among friends and among enemies. It was less a correct theory than the necessity of practice that had taught the students there to act this way, since without that resource, they would have been mercilessly driven to betray their comrades. But, as the means proved itself in practice, it also proves itself theoretically[383]. A word of honor, an oath, is only for the one I entitle to receive it; anyone who forces me receives only a force, i.e., a *hostile* word, the word of an enemy, whom one has no right to trust; because the enemy doesn't give us that right.

Incidentally, state courts don't even recognize the inviolability of an oath. Because, if I swore to someone who comes under investigation that I would not testify against him, the court would demand my testimony, despite the oath that binds me, and in the case of refusal, would lock me up until I decided to become—an oath-breaker. The court "releases me from my oath";—how generous! If any power can release me from my oath, I myself am certainly the very first power entitled to do so.

As a curiosity, and to remind us of all sorts of customary oaths, one may find a place here for the one that Emperor Paul ordered the captured Poles (Kosciuśko, Potocki, Niemcewicz, etc.[384]) to take when

383 "*Bewährung*" is most frequently translated as "probation" in the legal sense, but can also be translated as "proving oneself, proving itself, proving its worth," and so "*haben seine Bewährung*" would be "to prove itself."

384 Polish nationalist leaders active in the Polish insurrection against the Russians of 1794.

he released them: "We swear not only loyalty and obedience to the emperor, but also promise to shed our blood for his glory; we bind ourselves to discovering everything threatening to his person or his empire that we ever learn; we declare finally that, in whatever part of the globe we may find ourselves, a single word from the emperor shall be enough to make us leave everything and go to join him at once."

In one area, the principle of love seems to have been long outstripped by egoism, and to still require only a sure awareness, as it were; victory with a clear conscience. This area is speculation in its dual aspect as thinking and as trade. One thinks without holding back, come what may; and one speculates, however many may suffer under our speculative undertakings. But when it finally comes down to it, when the last bit of religiosity, romance, or "humanity" is to be shrugged off, then the religious conscience strikes, and one at least *professes* humanity. The greedy speculator throws a few pennies into the poor-box and "does good"; the bold thinker consoles himself with the fact that he is working for the advancement of the human race and that his devastation "brings benefit" to humanity or that he "serves the idea"; humanity, the idea, is for him that something about which he must say: "For me, it goes above me."

Up to now people have thought and traded for—God's sake. Those who were trampling down everything for six days through their selfish aims, on the seventh day sacrificed to the Lord; and those who destroyed hundreds of "good causes" through their reckless thinking still did so in the service of another "good cause," and still had to think of another—besides themselves—to whom their self-gratification[385] gave benefit, of the people, of humanity, etc. But this other is an essence above them, a higher or supreme essence; and this is why I say they are toiling for God's sake.

Therefore, I can say that the ultimate basis for their actions is—love. However, not a voluntary, not their own, love, but rather a tributary love, or the higher essence's (i.e., God's, who is love itself) own love;

385 "*Selbstbefriedigung*" is the German word for "masturbation," but it is also used more figuratively. Knowing the playful care with which Stirner chose his words (and his willingness to get bawdy on occasion), I suspect he chose this word on purpose... and perhaps the idea of "mental masturbation" already existed in Germany at this time.

in short, not egoistic, but rather religious love, a love that springs from their delusion that they *have to* pay a tribute of love, i.e., that they aren't allowed to be "egoists."

If *we* want to rid the world of many sorts of bondage, we want it not for the world's sake, but for our own: because, since we are not saviors of the world by profession and out of "love," we only want to win it from others. We want to make it *our* own; it should no longer be *in bondage* to God (the church) or the law (the state), but rather *our own;* therefore we seek to "win" it, to "gain its favor," and thereby bring an end to the violence it uses against us, making this force unnecessary, so that we meet it as it meets us, and as soon as it belongs to us, devote ourselves to it as to ourselves. If the world is ours, it no longer attempts any violence *against* us, but only *with us.* My selfishness has an interest in the liberation of the world, so that it—will become my property.

The original state of the human being is not isolation or being alone, but rather society. Our existence begins with the most intimate connection, since already, before we breathe, we live together with the mother; then when we've seen the world's light, we immediately lie again on a human being's breast, her love cradles us on her bosom, leads us on a leash, and chains us to her person with a thousand ties. Society is our *natural condition.* This is why, as we learn to feel ourselves more, the connection that was once most intimate becomes looser and the breaking up of the original society more obvious. The mother must fetch the child, who once lay beneath her heart, from the street and from the midst of its playmates, to have it once again for herself. It prefers the *intercourse* that it enters into with *its peers* to the *society* that it did not enter into, but rather was only born in.

But the breaking up of *society* is *intercourse* or *associating.* Of course, a society arises from associating, but only as a fixed idea arises from a thought, namely in this way: the energy of the thought, thinking itself, this ceaseless taking back of all solidified thoughts, vanishes from the thought. If an association has crystallized into a society, it has ceased to be a coalition,[386] because coalition is a ceaseless associating with

386 "*Vereinigung.*"

each other; it has become a condition of being associated,[387] come to a standstill, degenerated into a fixity; it is—*dead* as associating, it is the corpse of the association or the coalition, it is—society, community. The party provides a striking example of this sort.

That a society, for example, state society, diminishes my *freedom* doesn't much appall me. I have to let my freedom be limited by all sorts of powers and by anyone who is stronger, indeed by every fellow-human being; and if I were the autocrat of all the R—[388], I would still not enjoy absolute freedom. But I will not let *ownness* be taken from me. However, society has its sights precisely on ownness, precisely this is supposed to be subjected to its power.

Indeed, a society to which I adhere takes many a freedom away from me, but grants me other freedoms in return; there's also nothing to say[389] if I myself deprive myself of this or that freedom (for example, by any contract). However, I want to jealously hold on to my ownness. Every community has the inclination, stronger or weaker according to the fullness of its power, to become an *authority* to its members and to set *limits* for them: it demands, and must demand, a "limited subject's understanding"; it demands that those who belong to it subject themselves to it, be its "subjects"; it exists only through *subjection*. In this, a certain tolerance doesn't need to be excluded; on the contrary, the society will welcome improvements, corrections, and reprimands, insofar as these are calculated for its benefit; but the reprimands must be "well-intentioned" and are not allowed to be "rude and disrespectful"; in other words, one must leave the substance of society intact and hold it sacred. Society demands that those who belong to it don't go *beyond it* and rise up, but rather remain "within the bounds of legality," i.e., allow themselves only as much as society and its law allows them.

It makes a difference whether my freedom or my ownness gets limited by a society. If only the former is the case, it is a *coalition,* an

387 "*Einem Vereinigtsein.*" Thus, a completed process that is no longer an activity of those involved.

388 A reference to the Russian Czar, worded this way to get past the censors.

389 Literally, "*auch hat es nichts zu sagen*," "it also has nothing to say." So Stirner may have meant that society has no say in whether an individual chooses to deprive himself of specific freedoms.

agreement, an association; but if it threatens ownness with ruin, it is a *power for itself,* a power *over me,* a thing inaccessible to me, which I can indeed admire, worship, honor, respect, but cannot conquer and consume, and I cannot do this because I *am resigned.* It exists through my *resignation*, my *self-denial*, my faint-heartedness, called—**humility.**[390] My humility makes society's courage, my submission gives it its power to rule.

But with respect to *freedom*, state and associating are subject to no essential difference. The latter can arise or persist without freedom being limited in all sorts of ways just as little as the state tolerates unmeasured freedom. Limitation of freedom is inevitable everywhere, because one can't get *rid* of everything; one can't fly like a bird merely because he would like to fly this way, since he won't get free of his own weight; one can't live under water, like a fish, for any length of time he may like, because he can't do without air and get free of this indispensable need; and so on. As religion, and most resolutely Christianity, torments human beings with the demand to realize the unnatural and the nonsensical, so it is to be regarded as the authentic consequence of that religious extravagance and exuberance that finally *freedom itself, absolute freedom*, was elevated to an ideal, and so the nonsense of the impossible had to glaringly come to light. —But the association will offer both a greater level of freedom, and, in particular, may be considered as "a new freedom," because through it one escapes constraints typical of state and social life; but still it will contain enough unfreedom and compulsoriness. Because its purpose is not simply—freedom, which on the contrary it sacrifices to ownness, but only *ownness.* In this respect, the distinction between state and associating is great enough. The former is an enemy and murderer of *ownness,* the latter its son and assistant; the former is a spirit that wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, the latter my act, my product; the state is the lord of my mind, who demands faith and dictates articles of faith to me, the articles of faith of legality; it exerts moral influence, dominates my mind, drives away my *I* to set itself in

390 In this sentence and the next one, Stirner is playing on the word "*Mut,*" which is translated as "courage" or "boldness." "Faint-heartedness" is "*Mutlosigkeit,*" that is, the condition of lacking courage. "Humility" is "*Demut*" which can also be translated as meekness, and thus implies a lack of courage.

its place as "my true *I*"—in short, the state is *sacred,* and as opposed to me, the individual human being, it is the true human being, the spirit, the ghost; but the association is my own creation, my creature, not sacred, not a spiritual power over my mind, any more than any association[391] of whatever sort. As I don't like being a slave to my maxims, but rather expose them to my continual criticism without *any guarantee,* and admit no surety of their persistence, so even less will I commit myself to the association for my future and pledge my soul to it, as they say is done with the devil, and is actually the case with the state and all spiritual authority; but I am and remain *more* to myself than state, church, God, and the like; consequently infinitely more than the association too.

That society which communism wants to establish seems to be closest to the *coalition*. Because it is supposed to aim for the "well-being of all"—oh, yes, of all, cries Weitling countless times, of all! That actually looks as if no one had to miss out. But what then would this welfare be? Does everyone have one and the same well-being, are all equally well off with one and the same thing? If so, then it's about "true well-being." With this, don't we come to the exact point where religion begins its tyranny? Christianity says, don't look on earthly baubles, but seek your true well-being, become—devout Christians; the Christian life is the true well-being. It is the true well-being of "all," because it is the well-being of *the* human being as such (this phantasm). Now is the well-being of all still also supposed to be *your* and *my* well-being? But if you and I don't look upon that well-being as *our* well-being, will care then be taken for that in which *we* find well-being? On the contrary, society has decreed one welfare as the "true well-being," and if this well-being is called, for example, enjoyment honestly worked for, but you would prefer enjoyable laziness, enjoyment without work, then society, which cares for the "well-being of all," would wisely be on guard against caring for that by which you are well-off. In proclaiming the well-being of all, communism utterly obliterates the well-being of those who up to now lived on their pensions and probably found themselves better off in this than in Weitling's prospect of strict work hours. Therefore, Weitling asserts

391 "*Assoziation.*"

that the well-being of millions cannot exist with the well-being of thousands, and the latter will have to give up their special well-being "for the sake of the general well-being." No, you don't call people to sacrifice their special well-being for the general, because you won't come through with this Christian demand; they will better understand the opposite exhortation to not let anyone snatch their *own* well-being from them, but to put it on a lasting foundation. They are then led of themselves to see that they provide best for their well-being when they *join together* with others for this purpose, i.e., "sacrifice a bit of their freedom", but not to the well-being of others, but rather to their own. An appeal to the human being's self-sacrificing attitude and self-denying love should have finally lost its seductive glow when, after thousands of years of activity, it has left nothing behind but the—present-day misery. So why go on fruitlessly expecting self-sacrifice to bring us better times; why not rather hope for them from *usurpation*? Salvation no longer comes from the givers, the bestowers, the loving ones, but from the *takers*, the appropriators (usurpers), the owners. Communism and, consciously or unconsciously, egoism-cursing humanism still count on *love*.

If community is a need of the human being and he finds himself aided by it in his aims, then very quickly, because it has become his principle, it also prescribes its laws to him, the laws of—society. The principle of human beings raises itself to a sovereign power over them, becomes their highest essence, their God, and as such—lawgiver. Communism gives this principle the most rigorous consequence, and Christianity is the religion of society, because, as Feuerbach rightly says, although he doesn't mean it rightly, love is the essence of the human being, i.e., the essence of society or of societary (communistic) human beings. All religion is a cult of society, this principle by which the societary (cultivated) human being is dominated; and no god is exclusively the god of an *I*, but always a society's or community's god, whether it's of the society "family" (Lar, Penates[392]) or of a "people" ("national god") or of "all people" ("he is a father of all people").

So a person has a chance of razing religion to the ground only when he makes *society* and all that flows from this principle obsolete. But

392 Roman household gods.

this principle seeks to culminate in communism, since in it everything is to be *held in common*, for the establishment of—"equality." If this "equality" is won, "freedom" too is not lacking. But whose freedom? *Society's!* Society is then all in all, and human beings are only "for each other." It would be the glory of the love-state.

But I would rather have to rely on the selfishness of human beings than on their "acts of charity," their mercy, their compassion, etc. The former calls for *mutuality* (as you to me, so I to you), does nothing "gratis,"[393] and lets itself be won and—*purchased*. But with what shall I acquire charity? It's a matter of luck whether I am dealing at the moment with a "loving" person. The loving one's services can be gotten only by—*begging,* whether through my utterly lamentable appearance, my neediness, my misery, or my—*suffering.* What can I offer him for his assistance? Nothing! I have to accept it as—a *gift.* Love is *beyond payment,* or rather, love can most certainly be paid for, but only by loving back ("One good turn deserves another"). What wretchedness and beggarliness does it not take to accept gifts year after year without any favor in return, as such gifts are regularly collected, for example, from the poor day laborer? What can the receiver do for him and his donated pennies, in which his wealth consists? The day-laborer would truly have more enjoyment if the receiver with his laws, his institutions, etc., all of which the day laborer still has to pay for, did not exist at all. And yet, through it all, the poor wretch *loves* his master.

No, community, as the "goal" of history up to now, is impossible. Let us rather break with every hypocrisy of community and recognize that, if we are equal as human beings, we are simply not equal because we are not human beings. We are equal *only in thoughts,* only when "we" are thought, not as we actually and bodily are. I am I, and you are I, but I am not this thought-of *I*, but rather this *I* in which we are all equal is only *my thought.* I am human, and you are human, but "human" is only a thought, a generality; neither you nor I are speakable, we are *unutterable,* because only *thoughts* are speakable and exist in speaking.

Let's therefore not strive for community, but for *one-sidedness.* Let's not seek the broadest commune, "human society," but rather let's seek

393 "*Umsonst*" also means "without purpose."

in others only means and organs that we use as our property! As we don't see our equals in trees, in animals, so the assumption that others are *our equals* arises from a hypocrisy. No one is *my equal,* but I consider him, equally with all other beings, as my property. In opposition to this, one tells me that I should be a human being among "fellow human beings,"[394] I should "respect" the fellow human being in them. No one is for me a person to be respected, not even the fellow human being, but rather solely an *object,* like other beings, for which I have or don't have concern, an interesting or uninteresting object, a usable or unusable creature.

And if I can use him, I surely come to an understanding and reach an agreement with him, to strengthen *my power* through the agreement and to accomplish more through combined force than individual force could achieve. In this mutuality I see nothing at all beyond a multiplication of my strength, and I'll keep at it only so long as it is *my* multiplied strength. But so it is an—association.

Neither a natural nor a spiritual tie holds the association together, and it is not a natural nor a spiritual alliance. Neither one blood, nor one faith (spirit), brings it about. In a natural alliance—like a family, a tribe, a nation, indeed, humanity—individuals only have the value of *specimens* of the same type of species; in a spiritual alliance—like a parish or a church—the individual only symbolizes a *member* of the same spirit; what you are as unique must in both cases be suppressed. You can assert yourself as unique only in the association, because the association doesn't possess you, you possess it or make it of use to you.

Property is recognized in the association, and only in the association, because one no longer holds what is his as a fief from any essence. The communists only consistently take farther what had already existed for a long time during religious development and especially in the state, namely, propertylessness, i.e., the feudal system.

The state endeavors to tame the desiring person; in other words, it seeks to direct his desire to itself alone and to *appease* this desire with what it offers. To satiate the desire for the desiring person's sake, doesn't enter its mind; on the contrary, it rebukes the human being who breathes out unbridled desire for being an "egoistic human

394 ▸ Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage,* p. 60.

being," and the "egoistic human being" is its enemy. He is this to the state, because it lacks the ability to come to terms with him; it simply cannot "comprehend" the egoist. Since the state has to act only for itself, as nothing else is possible, it does not take care of my needs, but only takes care of how it snuffs me out, i.e., makes out of me a different *I*, a good citizen. It takes measures for "moral improvement". —And with what does it win the individual for itself? With itself, i.e., with what is the state's, with *state property*. It will be constantly acting to make everyone into partakers of its "goods," to present to all the "good things of civilization"; it grants to them its education, opens to them the access to its cultural institutions, and qualifies them, by means of industry, to come into property, i.e., into a fief, etc. For all these fiefs it requires only the fair rent of constant *gratitude*. But the "ungrateful" forget to pay this gratitude. —Now, in essence "society" cannot act differently from the state.

You bring all of your power, your ability, into the association, and *assert yourself, while* in society you are *employed* with your labor power; in the former you live egoistically, in the latter humanly, i.e., religiously, as a "member of this Lord's body"; to the society, you owe what you have, and are obligated to it, are—possessed by "social obligations"; you use the association, and give it up undutifully and unfaithfully when you don't see any more use for it. If the society is more than you, then to you it is above you; the association is only your tool or the sword with which you intensify and increase your natural force; the association is there for you and through you, while society, on the contrary, lays claim to you for itself and is still there without you; in short, society is *sacred,* the association your *own;* society consumes *you*, *you* consume the association.

Nonetheless, people will not hold back with the objection that the agreement that was concluded could again become tiresome to us and limit our freedom; they will say, we too in the end would come to this, that "everyone must sacrifice a part of his freedom for the sake of the generality." It's just that the sacrifice wouldn't happen for the sake of the "generality" at all, as little as I made the agreement for the sake of the generality or even of any other human being; rather I entered into it for the sake of my own benefit, from *selfishness*. But as

to sacrificing, surely I only sacrifice what is not in my power; that is, I "sacrifice" nothing at all.

To come back to property, the lord is the property owner. Choose then whether you want to be lord, or whether society shall be lord! This will determine whether you will be an *owner* or a *pauper!* The egoist is owner, the socially conscious person a pauper. But pauperism[395] or propertylessness is the meaning of feudalism, of the feudal system, which since the last century has only changed feudal lord, putting "the human being" in the place of God, and accepting as a fief from humanity what had earlier been a fief from the grace of God. That the pauperism of communism is led out through the humane principle to the absolute or shabbiest pauperism has been shown above; but at the same time we have also shown how only in this way can pauperism suddenly turn into ownness. The *old* feudal system was so thoroughly scrapped in the revolution that since then all reactionary cunning has remained fruitless, and will always remain fruitless, because dead—is dead; but also the resurrection had to prove itself as a truth in Christian history, and has proved itself: because feudalism has risen again in an afterlife with a transfigured body, the *new* feudalism under the suzerainty of "the human being."

Christianity is not destroyed, but the believers are right if they have trustingly assumed up to now that every battle against it could only serve for its purification and reinforcement; because it has actually only been transfigured, and "Christianity exposed"[396] is the—*human* Christianity. We still live wholly in the Christian age, and those who get the angriest about it are the ones who most eagerly contribute to completing it. The more human, the better feudalism has become to us; because the less that we believe that it is still feudalism, the more confidently we take it for ownness and think that we have found what is "most our own" when we discover "the human."

Liberalism wants to give me what is mine, but means to obtain it

395 Here Stirner uses the word "*Lumperei*," which in present-day Germany means "dirty trick." It's an instance when I don't know whether Stirner is intentionally playing with words or whether the meaning of the word simply changed over time.

396 A reference to *Das entdeckte Christentum*, a fierce atheist polemic by Bruno Bauer, published in Zurich in 1843.

for me not under the title of mine, but under that of "the human." As if it were to be reached under this mask! Human rights, the costly work of the revolution, have the meaning that the human being in me *entitles* me to this or that; I as an individual, as this one, am not entitled, but the human being has the right and entitles me. So as a human being I may well be entitled; but since I am more than a human being, namely, an odd human being, it could get denied to just *me,* the odd one. If, on the other hand, you hold to the value of your gift, keep it at price, don't let yourself be forced to get rid of it below price, don't let yourself be convinced that your product is not worth the price, don't make yourself ridiculous by a "ridiculous bargain price," but imitate the courageous one who says: "I will *sell* my life (property) dear, the enemy shall not have it at a cheap *bargain";* then you have recognized the reverse of communism as the suitable thing, and then it's not: "Give up your property!" but rather "*actualize*[397] your property!"

Over the gateway of our time stands not the Apollonian slogan "Know thyself," but "*Actualize yourself!*"

Proudhon calls property "robbery" (*le vol*). But alien property—and he's talking only of this—comes to exist as much through renunciation, surrender, and meekness; it is a *gift*. Why so sentimentally call for pity as a poor victim of robbery, when you are just a foolish, cowardly gift-giver? Why here again blame others as if they had robbed us, when we ourselves are to blame in leaving the others unrobbed? The poor are to blame for the existence of the rich.

No one at all gets worked up over *his* property, but over *alien* property. People don't in truth attack property, but the alienation of property. They want to be able to call *more,* not less, *theirs;* they want to call everything *theirs.* So they fight against *alienness,* or, to form a word similar to property, against alienty. And how do they help themselves in this? Instead of transforming the alien into their own, they play at being impartial and demand only that all property be left to a third party (such as human society). They claim the alien not in

397 "*Verwertet,*" from "*verwerten.*" I have seen this word translated as "to make use of" and also as "to realize" in the more active sense. Due to the use of the same verb in the next sentence,"*Verwerte Dich!*", I chose to use "actualize."

their own name but in the name of a third party. Now the "egoistic" veneer is washed away, and everything is so clean and—human!

Propertylessness or pauperism, this then is the "essence of Christianity," as it is the essence of all religiosity (devotion, morality, humanity), and announced itself most clearly only in the "absolute religion," and became, as glad tidings, a gospel capable of development. We have the most striking development before us in the current fight against property, a struggle that is supposed to lead "humanity" to victory and make propertylessness complete: victorious humanity is the victory of—Christianity. But the "Christianity exposed" in this way is feudalism perfected, the all-embracing feudal system, i.e., perfect pauperism.

So, probably, this is once again a "revolution" against the feudal system?

Revolution and insurrection should not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in a radical change of conditions, of the prevailing condition or *status,* the state or society, and is therefore a *political* or *social* act; the latter indeed has a transformation of conditions as its inevitable result, but doesn't start from it, but from the discontent of human beings with themselves; it is not an armed uprising,[398] but a rising up of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The revolution isaimed at new *arrangements,* while the insurrection leads us to no longer *let* ourselves be arranged, but rather to arrange ourselves, and sets no radiant hopes on "institutions." It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established will collapse of itself; it is only a working of my way out of the established. If I leave the established, it is dead and falls into decay. Since now my aim is not the overthrow of the established order but my rising up above it, so

398 The German word here is "*Schilderhebung*," which literally means "shield raising" or "placard raising." In the former, since it referred to a practice of raising a new ruler on a shield, I found evidence of its use for uprisings, but the implication is always of an uprising with the intention of replacing, not eradicating, rulers. An exact English translation isn't really appropriate here, and so I merely changed Byington's "armed rising" to "armed uprising," though I considered using "standard raising" ("standard" in the sense of a banner representing a cause). But it should be kept in mind that this specifically refers to an armed uprising intended to establish a new ruler or ruling system in power.

my intention and action are not a political or social intention and action, but, since they are directed solely toward me and my ownness, an *egoistic* intention and action.

The revolution commands one to make *arrangements*; the insurrection[399] demands that one *stand or raise himself up*.[400] What *constitution* was to be chosen?—this question busied revolutionary heads, and the entire political period is bubbling with constitutional fights and constitutional questions, as the social talents too were unusually inventive about social arrangements (phalansteries[401] and the like). The insurrectionist strives to become constitutionless[402].

While I'm pondering a comparison for greater clarity, contrary to expectations, the founding of Christianity comes to me. From the liberal side, it is perceived as a bad thing in the early Christians that they preached obedience to the established heathen social order, ordered recognition of the heathen authorities, and confidently commanded, "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."[403] And yet how much turmoil arose at the same time against Roman rule, how seditious the Jews and even the Romans showed themselves to be against their own temporal government! In short, how popular was "political discontent"! Those Christians wanted to know nothing of this; they didn't want to join the "liberal tendencies." The times were so politically agitated that, as it says in the gospels, people thought that they could not more successfully accuse the founder of Christianity, than if they accused him of "political intrigue," and yet these same gospels report that he was precisely the one who took the least part in this political hustle and bustle. But why was he not a revolutionary, not a demagogue, as the Jews would have liked to see him; why was he not a liberal? Because he expected no salvation from a change in *conditions*, and this whole business was indifferent to him. He was not a revolutionary, like, for example, Caesar, but an insurrectionist;

399 "*Empörung.*"

400 "*Sich auf-oder empörzurichten.*"

401 A reference to Fourier's ideas for social stucture.

402 ▸ To protect myself against a criminal charge, I superfluously make the explicit remark that I choose the word "insurrection" because of its *etymological meaning*, and so am not using it in the narrow sense which is frowned upon in the penal code.

403 Matthew 22:21.

not a radical transformer of a state, but one who straightened *himself* up. This was why for him it was also solely a matter of "Be wise as serpents,"[404] which expresses the same sense as, in the special case, that dictum "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; indeed, he led no liberal or political fight against the established authorities, but wanted to walk his *own* path, indifferent to and undisturbed by these authorities. The government's enemies were no less indifferent to him than the government, because neither understood what he wanted, and he only had to keep them away from him with the wisdom of the serpent. But even if he was no agitator of the people, no demagogue or revolutionary, he, like every one of the ancient Christians, was all the more an *insurrectionist*, who raised himself up above all that the government and its opponents thought sublime, and released himself from everything to which they remained bound, and at the same time he undermined the sources of life of the whole heathen world, from which the established state had to wither away in any case; precisely because he rejected the overturning of the established order, he was its deadly enemy and actual destroyer; because he walled it in while he confidently and recklessly carried out the building of *his* temple over it without paying heed to the pains of those walled in.

Now, as happened with the pagan order, will the Christian order fare the same? A revolution certainly doesn't bring on the end if an insurrection isn't accomplished first!

My intercourse with the world, what does it aim at? I want to enjoy it, this is why it must be my property, and this is why I want to win it. I don't want the freedom, nor the equality of human beings; I want only *my* power over them, want to make them my property, i.e., make them *enjoyable*.[405] And if I don't succeed in that, well, then I also call the power over life and death, which the church and state reserved to themselves—mine. Denounce that officer's wife who, on the run in Russia, after her leg was shot off, took the garter from it, and used this to strangle her child, and then bled to death beside the corpse—denounce the memory of the—child-murderer. Who knows, if this child had remained alive, how much it could have "benefited the

404 Matthew 10:16.

405 The word Stirner use here, "*genießbar*," can also be translated as "edible."

world"! The mother killed it because she wanted to die *satisfied*, with her mind at rest. Perhaps this still appeals to your sentimentality, and you don't know how to read anything more out of it. So be it; I use it as an example for this, that *my* satisfaction decides my relationship with human beings, and that I also do not renounce, from any impulse toward humility, the power over life and death.

With regard to "social duties" in general, another doesn't give me my position toward others, so neither God nor humanity prescribes to me my relationship to human beings, but rather I give myself this position. To say this more eloquently: I have no duty to others, as I also have a *duty* to myself (for example, self-preservation, thus not suicide) only so long as I distinguish me from myself (my immortal soul from my earthly existence, etc.).

I no longer *humble* myself before any power and I realize that all powers are only my power, which I have to conquer at once when they threaten to become a power *against* or *over* me; each of them must only be one of my means to assert myself, as a hunting dog is our power against game, but we kill it if it attacks us ourselves. So I reduce all powers that dominate me to serving me. The idols exist through me; I need only stop creating them anew, then they no longer are; "higher powers" only exist because I raise them up and lower myself.

So my relationship to the world is this: I no longer do anything for it "for God's sake," I do nothing "for humanity's sake," but what I do, I do "for my sake." Thus, the world alone satisfies me, whereas it is characteristic of the religious standpoint, in which I also include the moral and the humane, that everything from it remains a *pious wish* (*pium desiderium*), a hereafter, something unattained. Thus, the universal salvation of humanity, the moral world of universal love, eternal peace, the cessation of egoism, etc. "Nothing in this world is perfect." With this miserable saying, the good separate from it and take refuge in their chamber with God, or in their proud "self-consciousness." But we remain in this "imperfect" world, because even so we can use it for our—self-enjoyment.

My intercourse with the world consists in this, that I enjoy it, and so consume it for my self-enjoyment. *Intercourse* is the *enjoyment of the world*, and belongs to my—self-enjoyment.

2.2.3 My Self-Enjoyment

We stand at the border of an era. The world up to now plotted nothing but the winning of life, provided for—*life*. Because—whether all activity is set in motion for the life of this world or the life of the other world, for the temporal or eternal life, whether one craves "daily bread" ("Give us this day our daily bread") or "sacred bread" ("the true bread from heaven"; "the bread of God, that comes down from heaven and *gives life* to the world"; "the bread of life"[406]), whether one provides for "dear life" or "life in eternity"—nothing changes the goal of the tension and care, which in either case proves to be *life*. Do the modern trends announce themselves differently? People now want no one to be at a loss for the most indispensable necessities of life, but want everyone to be secure in these; and on the other hand they teach that the human being has to concern himself with this life and immerse himself in this world, without vain concerns for an afterlife.

Let us express the same thing from another side. One who is worried only about *staying alive*, in his anxiety, easily forgets the *enjoyment* of life. If he is dealing only with staying alive, and he thinks, "If only I have dear life," he doesn't apply his full strength to using, i.e., enjoying, life. But how does one use life? By using it up, like the candle, which one uses by burning it. One uses life, and consequently himself, the living one, by *consuming* it and himself. *Enjoyment of life* is using life up.

Now—we seek out the *enjoyment* of life! And what did the religious world do? It sought out *life*. "What makes up the true life, the blessed life, etc.? How is it achieved? What must the human being do and become to be a truly living being? How does he fulfill this calling?" These and other questions indicate that the questioners were still searching for *themselves*, namely themselves in the true sense, in the sense of truly being alive. "What I am is foam and shadow; what I will be is my true self." To chase after this *I*, to produce it, to realize it, is the hard task of mortals, who die only to *rise again,* live only to die, live only to find the true life.

406 ▸ John 6.

Only when I am sure of myself, and no longer seek for myself, am I truly my property; I have myself, therefore I use and enjoy myself. On the other hand, I can never be happy with myself as long as I think that I first still have to find my true self, and that it must come to this, that not I but Christ or some other spiritual, i.e., ghostly, *I*—for example, the true human being, the human essence, or the like—lives in me.

A vast difference separates the two views: in the old, I go toward myself; in the new, I start from myself; in the former, I long for myself, in the latter, I have myself and do with myself what one does with any other property—I enjoy myself at my pleasure. I no longer fear for my life, but "squander" it.

From now on the question is not how a person can gain life, but how he can squander, can enjoy it; or not how he is to produce the true *I* in himself, but how he is to dissolve himself, to live his life to the full.

What else would the ideal be but the sought-after, always distant ? One seeks for himself, so he doesn't yet have himself; he strives for what he *should* be, thus he *is* not this. He lives in longing, and lived for thousands of years in it, in *hope*. It's something else altogether to live in—*enjoyment*.

Does this perhaps affect only the pious? No, it affects everyone who belongs to the departing historical era, even to its libertines. For them too, the working days were followed by a Sunday, and the hustle and bustle of the world by the dream of a better world, of a universal human happiness, in short, an ideal. But philosophers in particular are contrasted with the pious. Well, have they been thinking of anything other than the ideal, have they pondered over anything other than the absolute *I*? Longing and hope everywhere, and nothing but these. For all I care, call it romanticism.

If the *enjoyment of life* is to triumph over the *longing for life* or hope for life, then it must defeat this in its double meaning, which Schiller presents in his "*Ideal und Leben*."[407] It must crush spiritual

407 *Das Ideal and das Leben* (The Ideal and Life), the third title Schiller gave in 1804 to a philosophical poem first published in 1795 as *Das Reich der Schatten* (The Shadow Realm).

and earthly poverty, destroy the ideal and—the lack of daily bread. Anyone who has to spend his life eking out a living cannot enjoy it, and anyone who is still seeking for his life does not have it, nor can he enjoy it: both are poor, but "blessed are the poor."[408]

Those who hunger for the true life have no power over their present life, but must use it for the purpose of gaining that true life and must sacrifice it completely to this aspiration and mission. If with those religious devotees who hope for life in a world beyond and look upon life in this world as a mere preparation for that, the servitude of their earthly existence, which they give solely to the service of the hoped-for heavenly existence, is rather acutely obvious, still one would go far astray if one wanted to consider the most enlightened and sophisticated as less self-sacrificing. There is a much broader meaning to be found in the "true life" than the "heavenly" is capable of expressing. To bring out the liberal conception of it right away, isn't the "human" and the "truly human" life the true one? And does everyone perhaps already lead this truly human life from birth, or must he first raise himself to it by hard effort? Does he already have it as his present life, or must he win it as his future life, which will become his only when he is "no longer tainted by egoism"? In this view, life is only there to gain life, and a person lives only to make the human essence alive in himself; he lives for the sake of this essence. He has his life only to get, by means of it, the "true" life, cleansed of all egoism. Therefore, he is afraid to make any use he likes of his life; it should only serve for the "right use."

In short, a person has a *calling in life,* a life mission; he has something to realize and produce through his life, a something for which his life is only a means and a tool, a something that is worth more than this life, something to which he *owes* his life. He has a God who demands a *living sacrifice.* Only the brutality of human sacrifice has been lost with time; human sacrifice itself has remained undiminished, and hourly criminals fall in sacrifice to justice, and we "poor sinners" slaughter ourselves in sacrifice to "the human essence," the "idea of humanity," "humaneness," and whatever else the idols or gods are called.

But because we owe our life to that something, we therefore

408 Matthew 5:3.

have—this is the next point—no right to take it from ourselves.

The conservative tendency of Christianity doesn't allow thinking otherwise about death than with the intention of taking its sting from it and—to live on and preserve oneself nicely. The Christian lets everything happen and roll off his back, if he—arch-Jew—can only haggle and smuggle himself into heaven; he is not allowed to kill himself, he is only allowed to—preserve himself and work on the "preparation of a future dwelling place." Conservatism or "conquest of death" lies close to his heart: "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."[409] "Christ has taken away the power of death and brought life and *immortal* essence to light through the gospel."[410] "Immortality," stability.

The moral person wants the good, the right; and if he takes up the means that lead, that actually lead, to this goal, then these means are not *his* means, but those of the good, the right, etc., itself. These means are never immoral, because the good goal mediates itself through them: the end sanctifies the means. They call this principle jesuitical, but it is absolutely "moral." The moral person acts *in the service* of a goal or an idea; he makes himself the *tool* of the idea of the good, as the pious person counts it as his glory to be a tool or resource of God. Waiting for death is what the moral law demands as the good; to give oneself death is immoral and evil: *suicide* finds no excuse before the judgment seat of morality. The religious person forbids it because "It wasn't you who gave yourself life, but God, who alone can also take it back from you again" (as if, also in the above-mentioned idea, God didn't as much take it from me when I kill myself as when a tile or an enemy's bullet takes me down; indeed, he would also have roused the decision for death in me!); the moral person forbids it because I owe my life to the fatherland, etc., "because I don't know whether I might not yet do good through my life." Of course, the good loses in me a tool, as God loses a resource. If I am immoral, the good is served by my reformation; if I am "godless," God takes pleasure in my repentance. So suicide is ungodly as well as dastardly. If a person whose standpoint is religiosity takes his life, he is acting from

409 ▸ 1 Corinthian 15:26.
410 ▸ 2 Timothy 1:10.

forgetfulness of God; but if the suicide's standpoint is morality, then he is acting from forgetfulness of duty, immorally. People agonized much over the question of whether Emilia Galotti's[411] death could be justified before morality (they take it as if it were a suicide, which in substance it is). That she is so nuts about chastity, this moral good, as to even give up her life for it is, at any rate, moral; but that she has no confidence in her power over her flesh is immoral. Such contradictions universally form the tragic conflict in the moral tragedy; and you have to think and feel morally to be able to take any interest in it.

What is true of piety and morality will also necessarily apply to humanity, because one equally owes his life to the human being, humanity, and the species. Only when I am not under obligation to any essence is the preservation of life—my affair. "A leap from this bridge makes me free!"

But if we owe the preservation of our life to that essence that we are supposed to bring to life in ourselves, then it is no less our duty not to lead this life according to our pleasure, but rather to form it in accordance with that essence. All my feeling, thinking, and willing, all my doing and striving, belong to—it.

What is in accordance with that essence arises from the concept of it; and how differently has this concept been conceived, or how differently has that concept been depicted! What demands the highest essence makes upon the Moslem; and again what different demands the Christian believes he hears from it; how differently therefore must the two ways of life turn out! Only all hold fast to this: that the highest essence is to *pass judgment* on our life.

But everywhere I pass over the pious, who have their judge in God and a guidebook for their life in his word, as a memory, because they belong to a worn-out period of development and may remain as fossils in their fixed place. In our time, the pious are no longer the ones shooting their mouths off, but rather the liberals, and piety itself can't help but redden its pale face with liberal complexion. But the liberals do not venerate their judge in God, and do not carry out their life

411 *Emilia Galotti* was a bourgeois tragedy written by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and first performed in 1772. When she finds herself "under the protection" of a prince who is out to seduce her, she asks her father to kill her so that she will maintain her honor. Her father does as she asks.

with the guidance of the divine word, but judge themselves by the human being; they want to be and live not as "divine," but as "human."

The human being is the liberal's highest essence, the human being the *judge* of his life, humanity his *guidebook* or catechism. God is spirit, but the human being is "the most perfect spirit," the final result of the long spirit-hunt or of the "research into the depths of the Godhead," i.e., into the depths of the spirit.

Every one of your traits should be human; you should be so from top to toe, inside as outside; because humanity is your *calling*.

Calling—purpose—mission!

What one can become he also becomes. A born poet may well be hindered by unfavorable circumstances from standing at the high point of the time, and after the great studies essential for it create skilled works of art; but he will create poetry, whether he's a plowman or so lucky as to live at the court of Weimar. A born musician will make music, regardless of whether on all instruments or only on an oaten pipe. A born philosophical thinker can prove himself as a university philosopher or as a village philosopher. Finally, a born dunderhead, who can at the same time be a sly dog as this is thoroughly compatible with it, will always remain a pinhead (probably everyone who has gone to school can recall many examples among schoolmates), whether he is drilled and trained to be a bureau chief or serves the same chief as a bootblack. Indeed, the born dimwits indisputably form the most numerous class of human beings. And why shouldn't the same differences emerge in the human species that are unmistakable in every animal species? One finds the more talented and the less talented everywhere.

Only a few, however, are so idiotic that one couldn't get ideas across to them. Therefore, people usually maintain that all human beings are capable of having religion. To a certain extent, they may be trained to other ideas; for example, to a musical understanding, even a bit of philosophy, etc. Here then the priesthood of religion, morality, culture, science, etc. enters in, and the communists, for example, want to make everything accessible to all through there "public school." There's a common claim heard that this "great mass" can't get along without religion; the communists broaden this to

the proposition that not only the "great mass," but absolutely all, are called to everything.

As though it weren't enough to train the great mass to religion, now the public school is even supposed to have to deal with "all that is human." Training is becoming more and more general and comprehensive.

You poor things, who could live so happily if you were allowed to leap according to your own feelings, you're supposed to dance to the pipe of school-masters and bear-trainers, to perform tricks that you yourself would never use yourself for. And you don't even finally kick out against always being taken for something other than you want to give yourselves. No; you yourselves mechanically recite the question recited to you: "To what am I called? What *should* I do?" You only have to ask to have someone *tell* you what you should do and *command* you to do it, to have someone mark out your *calling* for you, or else to command yourselves to do it and impose it on yourselves according to the spirit's order. Then one says with regard to the will, I will to do what I *should* do.

A human being is "called" to nothing, and has no "mission," no "purpose," no more than a plant or a beast has a "calling." The flower doesn't follow the calling to complete itself, but applies all its forces to enjoy and consume the world as best it can, i.e., it sucks in as much of the earth's juices, as much of the ether's air, as much of the sun's light, as it can get and accommodate. The bird doesn't live up to any calling, but it uses its forces as much as possible: it catches bugs and sings to its heart's delight. But the forces of the flower and the bird are small compared to those of a human being, and a human being who uses his forces will intervene in the world much more powerfully than a flower or a beast. He has no calling, but he has forces that manifest themselves where they are, because their being consists solely in their manifestation and can no more remain idle than life, which, if it "stood still" for even a second, would no longer be life. Now, one could call out to human beings: "use your force." But the meaning would be put into this imperative that it is the mission of the human being to use his force. It's not so. Rather, everyone actually uses his force without first looking at this as his calling; at every moment

everyone uses as much force as he possesses. One is likely to say of a defeated person, he should have exerted his forces more; except one forgets that if, at the moment of succumbing, he had had the strength to exert his forces (e.g., bodily forces), he would not have failed to do it; even if it was only the discouragement of a minute, this was still a minute-long—lack of force. Forces may certainly be sharpened and multiplied, particularly by hostile resistance or friendly assistance; but where their use is missing, there you can also be sure of their absence. One can strike fire from a stone, but without the striking none comes out; in the same way, the human being also requires "prods."

Now this is why, since forces always prove to be working of themselves, the command to use them would be superfluous and meaningless. To use his forces is not the *calling* and mission of the human being, but rather is his actual and existing *act* at all times. Force is only a simpler word for manifestation of force.

Now, as this rose is a true rose from the start, this nightingale always a nightingale, so I am not a true human being only when I fulfill my calling, live up to my purpose, but I am a true human being from birth. My first babbling is the vital sign of a "true human being," my life struggles are the outpourings of its force, my last breath is the last exhalation of the force of the "human being."

The true human being doesn't lie in the future, an object of longing, but rather it lies in the present, existing and actual. However and whoever I may be, joyful and sorrowful, a child or an old man, in confidence or doubt, asleep or awake, I am it, I am the true human being.

But if I am *the* human being and have actually found this, which religious humanity has designated as the distant goal, in myself, then everything "truly human" is also *my own*. What was attributed to the idea of humanity belongs to *me*. That freedom of trade, for example, which humanity is still supposed to attain, and which people put off to humanity's golden future like an enchanting dream, I take it to myself in advance as my property and carry it on in the meantime in the form of smuggling. Of course, only a few smugglers would know to account to themselves for their deeds in this way, but the instinct of egoism replaces their awareness. I've shown the same thing about freedom of the press above.

Everything is my own, so I take back to me what tries to escape me, but above all I always take myself back when I have slipped away from myself into any servitude. But this is not my calling, but my natural act.

Enough, there is a powerful difference whether I make myself the starting point of the goal. As the latter, I don't have myself, I am therefore still alien to myself, am my *essence,* my "true essence," and this "true essence" that is alien to me will pursue me with its mockery as a phantasm with a thousand names. Because I am not yet *I*, another (like God, the true human being, the truly pious person, the rational person, the free person, etc.) is I, my *I*.

Still far away from myself, I separate myself into two halves, of which one, the one that's unattained and to be fulfilled, is the true one. The one, the untrue one, namely the unspiritual one, must be brought as a sacrifice; the other, the true one, is supposed to be the whole human being, namely the spirit. Then it is said, "The spirit is the human being's authentic essence," or, "The human being exists as a human being only spiritually." Now a person goes at it greedily to catch the spirit, as if he would have then gotten hold of *himself,* and so, in the hunt for himself, he loses sight of himself, who he is.

And as he stormily pursues his self, the never-attained, so he also despises the rule of the wise to take people as they are, and prefers to take them as they should be; and for this reason he hounds everyone to become their should-be selves and "strives to make all into equally entitled, equally respectable, equally moral or rational human beings."[412]

Indeed, "if human beings were as they *should* be, *could* be, if all human beings were rational, if all loved each other as brothers," then it would be an Edenic life.[413] —Well, human beings are as they should be, as they can be. What should they be? Surely not more than they can be! And what can they be? Again, not more than they—can, than they have the capacity, the strength, to be. But this they actually are, because what they are not, they are not able to be; because to be able means—to actually be. One is capable of nothing that one actually is not; one is capable of doing nothing that one does not actually

412 ▸ (Anonymous), *Der Kommunismus in der Schweiz. Eine Beleuchtung des Kommissionalberichtes des Herrn Dr. Bluntschli über die Kommunisten in der Schweiz nach den bei Weitling vorgefundenen Papieren* (Berne, 1843), p. 24.

413 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

do. Could someone blinded by a cataract see? Oh yes, if he had the cataract successfully cut out. But now he can't see, because he doesn't see. Possibility and actuality always coincide. One can do nothing that one does not do, as one does nothing that one cannot do.

The strangeness of this statement vanishes when one considers that the words "It is possible that..." almost never involve another meaning than "I can imagine that..."; for example, it is possible for all human beings to live rationally, i.e., I imagine that all, etc. Since my thinking cannot cause, and therefore does not cause, all human beings to live rationally, but rather this must be left to the people themselves, universal reason is for me only thinkable, a thought process, but as such in fact an *actuality* that is called a possibility only in relation to what I *can* not bring about, namely the rationality of others. As far as it depends on you, all human beings could be rational, because you have nothing against it; indeed, as far as your thinking extends, you perhaps can't find any obstacle either, and consequently also in your thinking nothing stands in the way of the thing; it is thinkable to you.

But since human beings are not all rational, most likely they—cannot be so.

If something that one imagines to be quite possible is not, or does not happen, then one may rest assured that something stands in the way of the thing, and that it is—impossible. Our time has its art, science, etc.: the art may be utterly awful; but could one say that we deserve to have a better one, and "could" we have it if we only wanted it? We have just as much art as we can have. Our present-day art is the *only art possible*, and therefore actual, now.

Even in the sense to which a person could finally reduce the word "possible," that it means "future," it keeps the full force of the "actual." If one says, for example, "It is possible that the sun will rise tomorrow," this only means, "For today, tomorrow is the actual future"; since there is probably barely a need to hint that a future is actual "future" only when it has not yet appeared.

But why this evaluation of a word? If the most consequential misunderstanding of thousands of years were not kept hidden behind it, if all the phantasms of possessed human beings didn't haunt this

single concept of the little word "possible," its contemplation would have to concern us little here.

As was just shown, thought rules the possessed world. Well, then, possibility is nothing other than thinkableness, and numberless victims have fallen up to now to hideous *thinkableness.* It was *thinkable* that human beings could become rational, thinkable that they would know Christ, thinkable that they would become moral and enthusiastic about the good, thinkable that they would all take refuge in the bosom of the church, thinkable that they would ponder, speak, and do nothing dangerous to the state, thinkable that they *might* be obedient subjects; but, because it was thinkable, it was—so goes the deduction—possible, and further, because it was possible for human beings (precisely here lies the deception; because it is thinkable to me, it is possible for *human beings*), therefore they were *supposed* to be so, it was their *calling,* and finally—one was to take human beings only according to this calling, only as those *called,* not "as they are, but as they should be."[414]

And the further deduction? The human being is not the individual, but the human being is rather a *thought,* an *ideal,* to which the individual doesn't even relate as the child to the man but as a chalk point to an imaginary point, or as a finite creature to the eternal Creator, or according to modern views, as the specimen to the species. Here then the glorification of "humanity," the "eternal, immortal," comes to light, to whose glory (*in maiorem humanitatis gloriam*[415]) the individual must dedicate himself and find his "immortal fame" in having done something for the "the spirit of humanity."

So *thinkers* rule in the world so long as the time of priests or schoolmasters lasts, and what they think of is possible, but what is possible must be actualized. They *think* a human ideal, that is for the time being only actual in their thoughts; but they also think of the possibility of carrying it out, and there is no arguing, the carrying out is actually—thinkable, it is an—idea.

But you and I, we may indeed be people about whom a Krummacher

414 Most likely an allusion to *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist and wie sie soll sein* (*Humanity, as it is and as it should be*), 1839, by Wilhelm Weitling.

415 "To the greater glory of humanity"—a parody of the Jesuit motto "*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.*"

could *think* that we may still become good Christians; if he wanted to "deal with" us, however, we would soon make him perceive that our Christianity is only *thinkable,* but otherwise *impossible*; if he kept on grinning away at us with his meddlesome *thoughts,* his "good faith," he would have to learn that we don't at all need to become what we don't want to become.

And so it goes on, far beyond the most pious of the pious. "If all human beings were rational, if all did right, if all were guided by philanthropy, etc.!" Reason, right, philanthropy, etc., are put before the eyes of human beings as their calling, as the goal of their endeavors. And what does being rational mean? To hear oneself out? No, reason is a book full of laws, which are all passed against egoism.

History up to now has been the history of the *intellectual* or *spiritual* human being. After the period of sensuality, history in the strict sense begins, i.e., the period of intellectuality, spirituality, non-sensuality,[416] supernaturalism,[417] nonsense.[418] The human being now begins to want to be and become *something*. What? Good, beautiful, true; more precisely, moral, pious, agreeable, etc. He wants to make a "proper human being," "something proper," of himself. The *human* is his goal, his should, his destiny, calling, task, his—*ideal:* he is to himself a future, an other-worldly being. And *what* makes him a "proper guy"? Being true, being good, being moral, and the like. Now he looks askance at anyone who doesn't recognize the same "what," seek the same morality, have the same faith; he chases away the "separatists, heretics, sects," etc.

No sheep, no dog, makes the effort to become a "proper sheep, a proper dog"; no beast's essence appears to it as a task, as a concept that it has to realize. It realizes itself by enjoying itself, dispersing itself, dying. It doesn't ask to be or become anything *other* than what it is.

Do I want to advise you to be like the beasts? I certainly can't suggest that you should become like beasts, because this is also a task, an ideal ("The bee can outdo you in industriousness"). It would also be the same as if you wished that beasts would become human. Your

416 "*Unsinnlichkeit.*."
417 "*Übersinnlichkeit.*."
418 "*Unsinnigkeit.*."

nature is after all a human one; you are human natures, i.e., human beings. But precisely because you already are so, you don't still need to become so. Beasts too are "trained," and a trained beast does many unnatural things. But a trained dog is no better for itself than a natural one, and gains nothing from it, even if the dog is more companionable for us.

Efforts to "mold" all human beings into moral, rational, pious, human, etc. "essences," i.e., training, have been in vogue from time immemorial. They are shipwrecked on the indomitable sense of self[419], on own nature, on egoism. The trained never reach their ideal, and only profess the sublime principles with their *mouth,* or only make a *profession,* a profession of faith. In the face of this profession they must "acknowledge that they are altogether sinners" in *life,* and fall short of their ideal, are "weak people" and carry with them the consciousness of "human weakness."

It's different if you don't aim for an *ideal* as your "destiny," but rather disperse yourself as time disperses everything. The dispersal is not your "destiny," because it is present.

Still the *education,* the religiousness, of human beings has certainly made them free, but only free from one lord, to furnish them to another. I have learned from religion to restrain my desire, I break through the resistance of the world through cunning which comes into my hand through *science;* I don't even serve any human being; "I am no human being's slave." But then it comes: You must obey God rather than human beings. In the same way, I'm free from the unreasonable determination by my instincts, but obedient to the master: *reason.* I have gained "spiritual freedom," "freedom of the spirit." So I have then become subservient precisely to the *spirit.* The spirit commands me, reason directs me, they are my leaders and commanders. The "reasonable," the "servants of the spirit," rule. But if *I* am not flesh, I am also truly not spirit. Freedom of the spirit is my enslavement, because I am more than spirit or flesh.

Without a doubt education has made me *powerful.* It has given me power over all *impulses,* over my natural drives, as well as over the impositions and outrages of the world. I know—and have gained the

419 "*Ichheit,*," or "I-ness.."

strength to act on the knowledge through education—that I need not let myself be compelled by any of my desires, lusts, emotional surges, etc.; I am their—*master,* in like manner, through the sciences and the arts, I become the *master* of the stubborn world, whom earth and sea obey, and to whom even the stars must give an account of themselves. The spirit has made me *master.* —But I have no power over the spirit itself. From religion (education) I learn well the means for "defeating the world," but not how I will also conquer *God* and become his master; because God "is the spirit." In fact, this spirit, of which I am not able to become the master, can have the most diverse forms; it can be called God or national spirit,[420] state, family, reason, also—freedom, humanity, the human being.

I take in with thanks what centuries of education have acquired for me; I am not willing to throw away and give up any of it: *I* have not lived in vain. The experience that I have *power* over my nature, and do not need to be a slave of my desires, shall not be lost to me; the experience that I can conquer the world through educational means is purchased at too high a price for me to be able to forget it. But I want even more.

People ask, what can the human being become, what can he achieve, what goods can he procure?—and make the highest of everything out to be a calling. As if everything were possible to *me!*

If one sees someone going to ruin in an obsession, a passion, etc. (for example, in the haggling-spirit, in jealousy), this stimulates the desire to rescue him from this possession and to help him to "self-conquest." "We want to make a man of him!" This would be very nice if another obsession were not immediately put in the place of the earlier one. But one frees a person from the love of money who has been its slave, only to deliver him over to piety, humanity, or some other principle, and transfer him again to a *fixed standpoint.*

This transfer from a narrow standpoint to an exalted one is expressed in the words: the sense should not be directed toward the perishable, but solely toward the imperishable; not toward the temporal, but toward the eternal, absolute, divine, purely human,

420 "*Volksgeist*,," a concept found in Hegel, but traceable to German romanticism, based on the idea that each nation has a special "genius" or "character."

etc.—toward the *spiritual.*

People very soon realized that it isn't unimportant what one set his heart on, or what one devoted his attention to; they recognized the significance of the *object.* An object raised above the particularity of things is the *essence* of things; indeed, the essence alone is the thinkable in them, it is for the *thinking* person. Therefore, don't any longer direct your *sense* toward the *things,* but rather your *thoughts* toward the *essence.* "Blessed are they who see not and yet believe,"[421] i.e., blessed are the *thinkers,* because they deal with the invisible and believe in it. But even an object of thought, which constituted an essential point of contention for centuries, finally reaches the point of being "no longer worth mentioning." People realized this, but still they always kept in mind an inherently valid importance of the object, an absolute value of it, as if the doll were not the most important thing to the child, and the Koran to the Turk. As long as I am not the sole important thing to myself, it doesn't matter which object I make "a lot of fuss" about, and only my greater or smaller *crime* against it is of value. The degree of my attachment and devotion marks the standpoint of my servitude, the degree of my trespass shows the extent of my ownness.

But finally, a person has to generally know how to "put everything out of his mind," if only so that he can—go to sleep. Nothing can concern us with which *we* do not concern ourselves: the overly ambitious person can't get away from his ambitious plans, nor the God-fearing person from the thought of God; infatuation and being possessed come together as one.

Only the sensual and sinful human being, the human being so long as he has the uneasy choice between happiness of the senses and peace of the soul, so long as he is a "poor sinner,"[422] can propose to himself that he wants to realize his essence or live according to his concepts, which for believers in God means the same as being "pious" and for believers in humanity means the same as living "humanly."

421 A reference to Jesus' words to "doubting Thomas," the disciple who, according to the gospel tale, refused to believe in the resurrection until he could see and feel Jesus' wounds. See John 20:29.

422 Probably a reference to Weitling's *The Poor Sinner's Gospel,* first published in 1843, which portrays Jesus as a precursor to communism.

The Christian is nothing but a sensual human being who, because he knows the sacred and is aware that he violates it, sees in himself a poor sinner: sensuality, understood as "sinfulness," is Christian consciousness, is the Christian himself. And now if the moderns no longer use "sin" and "sinfulness," but instead "egoism," "self-seeking," "selfishness," and the like worry them, if the devil has been translated into the "inhuman monster" or the "egoistic human being," is the Christian then less present than before? Doesn't the old conflict between good and evil, doesn't a judge over us—the human being—doesn't a calling, the calling to make oneself human, remain? If they no longer call it calling, but rather "task," or perhaps "duty," the name-change is quite correct, because "human being" is not, like God, a personal essence that can "call"; but apart from the name the thing remains as it was.

Everyone has a relationship to objects, and indeed, every one relates differently to them. Let's take as an example that book to which millions of people had a relationship for two thousand years, the Bible. What is it, what was it, to each one? Certainly, only what he *made of it!* For those who make nothing at all out of it, it is nothing at all; for those who use it as an amulet, it merely has the value, the significance, of a magical tool; for those who, like children, play with it, it is nothing but a plaything, etc.

Now, Christianity demands that it should *be the same for all:* for instance, the sacred book or the "sacred scriptures." This means the same thing as that the Christian's view should also be that of other human beings, and that no one is allowed to relate differently to that object. With this the ownness of the relationship is destroyed, and one sense, one attitude, is established as the "*true,*" the "only true," one. In the prevention of the freedom to do what I want with the Bible, the freedom of doing in general is prevented; and the constraint of a view or judgment is put in its place. Anyone who passes the judgment that the Bible was a long error of humanity would judge—*criminally.*

In fact, the child who tears it up or plays with it, and the Inca Atahualpa who lays his ear to it and scornfully throws it away when it remains silent, judge just as correctly about the Bible as the priest who praises the "Word of God" in it, or the critic who calls it a work

of human hands. Because how rough we are with things is the affair of our *discretion,* our *caprice;* we use them to our *heart's content,* or more clearly, we use them just as we *can.* So what are the priests screaming about when they see Hegel and the speculative theologians make speculative thoughts out of the contents of the Bible? Precisely this, that they act toward it according to their heart's content, or "proceed capriciously with it."

But because we all show ourselves capricious in our treatment of objects, i.e., deal with them as we *like* best, according to our *liking* (the philosopher likes nothing so much as when he can sniff out an "idea" in everything, as the God-fearing person likes to make God his friend through everything, so, for example, through holding the Bible sacred): we therefore nowhere encounter such painful capriciousness, such dreadful violence, such stupid constraints, as precisely in this sphere of our own capriciousness. If *we* proceed capriciously by taking the sacred objects thus or so, then why do we want to blame the priest-spirits if they *in their way* take us just as capriciously, and deem us worthy of the heretic's fire or another punishment, perhaps—censorship?

What a human being is, he makes out of things; "As you look at the world, so it looks back at you." Then the wise advice can immediately be heard: you must only look at it "rightly, impartially," etc. As if the child didn't look at the Bible "rightly and impartially" when it makes the Bible a plaything. Feuerbach, for example, gives us this shrewd instruction. A person looks at things just right when he makes of them what he *will* (by things here objects in general are understood, like God, our fellow human beings, a sweetheart, a book, a beast, etc.). And therefore the things and the perception of them are not first, but I am, my will is. A person *wills* to bring thoughts out of things, *wills* to discover reason in the world, *wills* to have sacredness in it; therefore, he shall find them. "Seek and ye shall find."[423] *What* I want to seek, *I* determine: for example, I want to get edification from the Bible; it is to be found; I want to read and examine the Bible thoroughly; my result will be a thorough instruction and criticism—according to my ability. I choose for myself what is my purpose, and in choosing I

423 See Matthew 7:7.

show myself—capricious.

This is linked to the realization that every judgment which I pass upon an object is the *creation* of my will, and in turn this realization leads me to not lose myself in the *creation,* the judgment, but to remain the *creator,* the one judging, who is always creating anew. All attributes of objects are my statements, my judgments, my—creations. If they want to break loose from me and be something for themselves, or even try to impose on me, then I have nothing better to do than to take them back into their nothing, into me the creator. God, Christ, trinity, morality, the good, etc., are such creations, of which I have to not only allow myself to say that they are truths, but also that they are delusions. As I once willed and decreed their existence, so I also want to be free to will their non-existence; I must not let them outgrow me, I must not have the weakness to let them become something "absolute," so that they would be made eternal and withdrawn from my power and decision. With this I fall for the *stability principle*, the original life-principle of religion, which concerns itself with creating "inviolable sanctuaries," "eternal truths," in short, something "sacred," and taking away from you what is *yours.*

The object makes us into possessed people in its sacred form just as in its profane form, as a supernatural[424] object as well as a sensual[425] one. The desire or mania refers to both, and greed for money and longing for heaven are on the same level. When Enlightenment philosophers wanted to win people for the sensual world, Lavater[426] preached the longing for the invisible. The one wanted to call forth *emotion,*[427] the others *motion.*[428]

The conception[429] of objects is thoroughly diverse, as God, Christ, world, etc., were and are conceived in the most varied ways. In this everyone is a "dissenter," and after bloody battles people have at last

424 "*Übersinnliches.*"

425 "*Sinnliches.*"

426 Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), A Swiss pastor and writer who promoted an emotional form of Christianity. Goethe ended a friendship with him in 1786.

427 "*Rührung.*"

428 "*Rührigkeit.*"

429 "*Auffassung*" can also be translated as "perception," "view," and the like and seems to imply the activity of conceiving more than an already set concept (*Begriff*).

achieved so much that opposing views about the same object are no longer condemned as heresies punishable by death. The "dissenters" get along with each other. But why should I only think differently about a thing—why not push the dissent to its farthest extreme, that is, to no longer give the thing any consideration at all, thus to think nothing of it, to crush it? Then the conception itself has an end, because there is nothing more to conceive. Why am I supposed to say, perhaps: "God is not Allah, nor Brahma, nor Jehovah, but—God"; but not, "God is nothing but a delusion"? Why do people stigmatize me if I am an "atheist"? Because they put the creation above the creator ("They worshipped and served the created thing rather than the Creator"[430]) and need a *ruling object,* so that the subject can serve quite submissively. I am supposed to bow *below* the absolute, I *should* do it.

Christianity has completed itself through the "realm of thoughts"; the thought is the inwardness in which all the world's lights go out, all existence ceases to exist, the inner being (the heart, the head) is all in all. This realm of thoughts is waiting for its deliverance, is waiting like the Sphinx for Oedipus' answer to its riddle, so that it can finally go to its death. *I* am the destroyer of its continued existence, because in the creator's realm, it no longer forms a realm of its own, no state in the state, but a creation of my creative—thoughtlessness. The Christian world, Christianity, and religion itself can only perish together and at the same time with the frozen, thinking world; only when thoughts fade out are there no more believers. To the thinker, his thinking is a "lofty work, a sacred activity," and it rests on a firm *belief*, the belief in truth. First, prayer is a sacred activity; then this sacred "devotion" changes into rational and reasoning "thinking," which still likewise holds to its unshakable basis of faith in the "sacred truth," and is only a wonderful machine which the spirit of truth winds up for its service. Free thinking and free science occupy *me*—because I am not free, *I* don't occupy myself, but thinking is free and occupies me—with heaven and the heavenly or "divine"; that is, in fact, with the world and the worldly, but just with "another" world; it is only the reversal and derangement of the world, a preoccupation with the *essence* of the world, therefore a *madness.* The thinker is blind to the immediacy of things

430 ▸ Romans 1:25.

and unable to master them; he doesn't eat, doesn't drink, doesn't enjoy, because the eater and drinker is never the thinker, indeed, the latter forgets eating and drinking, his getting on in life, nutritional concerns, etc., because of his thinking; he forgets it as the praying person also forgets it. This is why he appears to the vigorous son of nature as a hare-brained weirdo, a *fool,* even though he looks upon him as holy, the way lunatics appeared to the ancients. Free-thinking is lunacy, because it is *pure movement of the inner life,* the sheer *inner being,* which guides and governs the rest of the human being. The shaman and the speculative philosopher mark the lowest and the highest rungs on the ladder of the *inner* being, the—Mongol. Shamans and philosophers fight with ghosts, demons, *spirits,* gods.

This *free*-thinking is totally different from *own* thinking, *my* thinking, a thinking which does not guide me, but rather is guided, continued, or broken off by me, at my pleasure. This own thinking differs from free-thinking the way my own sensuality, which I satisfy as I please, differs from free, unbridled sensuality to which I succumb.

Feuerbach, in the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future,* is always insisting on *being.* In this, with all his opposition to Hegel and the absolute philosophy, he too gets stuck in abstraction—because "being" is abstraction, as is "the *I*" itself. Only *I am* not solely abstraction; *I am* all in all, consequently even abstraction or nothing; I am not a mere thought, but at the same time I am full of thoughts, a thought-world. Hegel condemns the own, what's mine[431], the—"view." "Absolute thinking" is the thinking which forgets that it's *my* thinking, that *I* think, and that it exists only through *me.* But I, as *I*, again devour what is mine, am its master; it is only my *view,* which at any moment I could *change,* i.e., annihilate, take back into myself, and devour. Feuerbach wants to strike down Hegel's "absolute thinking" with *unconquered being.* But in me, being is conquered as much as thinking. It is *my* being,[432] as the other is *my* thinking.

431 "*Meinige.*"

432 The version of *Der Einzige* that I am using has "*Sinn*" here with "*Sein*?" in brackets, with the assumption that this was a misprint. But it is possible that Stirner was making a sort of pun to get a point across: I *am,* I have being, only in that I *sense* myself. This would also fit with Stirner's criticism of Feuerbach's use of the "sensuous" found in the next paragraph.

Of course, with this Feuerbach gets no further than the proof, trivial in itself, that I need the senses for everything, or that I can't entirely do without these organs. Certainly, I cannot think if I don't exist sensuously. But for thinking as well as for feeling, and so for the abstract as well as the sensuous, above all things I need *me,* namely this quite particular me, this *unique* me. If I were not this one, say, for instance, Hegel, I would not look at the world as I look at it, I would not discover in it that philosophical system which I, precisely as Hegel, find, etc. I would indeed have senses like other people, but I would not use them as I do.

So Feuerbach makes the reproach against Hegel[433] that he misuses language, in that he understands many words differently from what natural consciousness takes them for, and yet Feuerbach also makes the same mistake when he gives to the "sensuous" a much more exalted sense than usual. So he says: "The sensuous is not the profane, the thoughtless, the blatantly obvious, which is understood of itself."[434] But if it is the sacred, what is full of thought, what lies hidden, what is understood only through mediation—well, then it is no longer what people call the sensuous. The sensuous is only that which exists for *the senses;* on the other hand, what is only enjoyable to those who enjoy with *more* than the senses, who go beyond sense enjoyment or sense reception,[435] is at most mediated or supplied by the senses, i.e., the senses make up a *condition* for obtaining it, but it is no longer anything sensuous. The sensuous, whatever it may be, when taken up into me, becomes something non-sensuous, which, however, might again have sensuous effects, for example by stirring my emotions or my blood.

It's quite good that Feuerbach makes sensuousness honorable, but all he knows how to do with this is to clothe the materialism of his "new philosophy" with what used to be the property of idealism, the

433 ▸ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), pp. 47ff.

434 ▸ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

435 The actual word that I have translated as "sense reception" is "*Sinnenempfängnis,*" which would literally mean the conception of the senses, in the same sense as the conception of a baby. Byington apparently took "*Empfängnis,*" in this instance, as being a version of "*Empfang.*" I am following him in this because the other option doesn't make sense in context. I am guessing that reception in this instance means something like perception.

"absolute philosophy." As little as people let themselves be persuaded that one could live on the "spiritual" alone without bread, so little will they believe him that as a sensuous being one is already everything, and so spiritual, full of thoughts, etc.

Nothing at all is justified by *being*. The imaginary thing *is* as much as the non-imaginary thing; the stone on the street *is*, and my image of it also *is*. The two are only in different *spaces*, the former in airy space, the latter in my head; because I am space like the street.

The experts or privileged tolerate no freedom of thought, i.e., no thoughts that do not come from the "giver of all good," whether one calls this giver God, pope, church, or whatever else. If anyone has such illegitimate thoughts, he must whisper them in his confessor's ear and let the latter chastise him until the slave-whip becomes unbearable to the free thoughts. The spirit of expertise also ensures in other ways that no free thoughts at all come, particularly through wise education. Anyone into whom the principles of morality get duly engraved will never again get free from moralistic thought, and robbery, perjury, cheating, etc., remain fixed ideas to him, against which no freedom of thought protects him. He gets his thoughts "from above," and sticks to them.

It's different for those with licenses or patents. Everyone must be able to have and make thoughts as he desires. If he has the patent or the license of thinking skills, he needs no special *privilege*. But since "all human beings are rational," so everyone is free to put any thoughts whatever into his head, and according to the patent of his natural talents to have a greater or lesser wealth of thoughts. Now we hear the admonitions that one "has to honor all views and convictions," that "every conviction is authorized," that one must be "tolerant of other people's opinions," etc.

But "your thoughts are not my thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." Or rather, I want to say the opposite: Your thoughts are *my* thoughts, which I dispose of as I will, and which I mercilessly beat down; they are my property, which I annihilate as I like. I do not first wait for your permission to break down and disperse your thoughts. It doesn't matter to me that you also call these thoughts yours; they nevertheless remain mine, and how I want to deal with

them is *my affair,* not presumption. It could please me to leave you to your thoughts; then I'll say nothing. Do you believe that thoughts fly around free like birds,[436] so that everyone would get some which he may then claim against me as his untouchable property? What is flying all around is all—*mine*.

Do you believe you have your thoughts for yourself and need answer to nobody for them, or as you probably also say, you have to account for them only to God? No, your great and small thoughts also belong to me, and I treat them as I please.

The thought is only my *own* when I have no hesitation about putting it in mortal danger at every moment, when I don't have to fear its loss as a *loss for me,* as a loss of me. The thought is only my own when I can indeed subdue it, but it can never subdue me, when it never makes me fanatical, a tool for its realization.

So freedom of thought exists when I can have every possible thought; but the thoughts only become property when they cannot become masters. In the time of freedom of thought, thoughts (ideas) *rule;* but if I attain property in thought, they act as my creatures.

If hierarchy had not penetrated so deeply into people's inner being as to take away all of their courage to pursue free thoughts, i.e., thoughts that might be displeasing to God, one would have to consider freedom of thought just as empty a phrase as, say, freedom of digestion.

From the expert's point of view, the thought is *given* to me; from that of the freethinker, I *seek* the thought. There the *truth* is already found and available, I only have to—receive it from its giver by grace; here the truth is to be sought and is my goal that lies in the future, towards which I have to run.

In both cases, the truth (the true thought) lies outside of me, and I strive to *get* it, whether as a gift (grace) or by purchase (my own earnings).[437] Thus, 1) The truth is a *privilege*; 2) No, the way to it is

436 This phrase, "free like birds," is the single word "*vogelfrei*" in German and can also be translated as "outlawed." So this passage may refer back to old property laws according to which a space that was "outside the law," because there were no property claims on it, could be grabbed by the first taker who made a claim.

437 There are other ways to translate this passage. I chose the most "economic" translation in order to emphasize that a person can only have what she sees as

permitted to all, and neither the Bible, nor the holy father, nor the church, nor anyone else is in possession of the truth; but one can come into possession of it by—speculating.

Both, as one can see, are *propertyless* in relation to the truth: they have it either as a *fief* (because the "holy father" is not a unique individual; as a unique individual he is this Sixtus, Clement, etc., but he doesn't have truth as Sixtus, Clement, etc., but as "holy father," i.e., as a spirit) or as an *ideal*. As a fief, it is only for a few (the privileged); as an ideal, for *all* (the licensed).

Freedom of thought, therefore, has the meaning that we indeed all walk in darkness and on the paths of error, but on this path everyone can approach *the truth* and is therefore on the right path ("All roads lead to Rome, to the world's end, etc.). So freedom of thought means this much, that the true thought is not my *own;* because if it were my own, how would anyone want to cut me off from it?

Thinking has become thoroughly free and has established a lot of truths to which *I* must submit. It seeks to complete itself in a *system* and to bring itself to an absolute "form." In the state, for example, it seeks for the idea until it has brought out the "rational state," in which I am then obliged to be adjusted; in the human being (anthropology), until it "has found the human being."

The thinker differs from the believer only in believing *much more* than the latter, who for his part with his belief (articles of faith) thinks a lot less. The thinker has a thousand tenets of faith where the believer gets along with few; but the former brings *coherence* into his tenets and in turn takes coherence as the standard for appraising them. If one or another of them doesn't suit his plan, he throws it out.

The thinkers run parallel to the believers in their statements. Instead of saying "If it is from God, you will not remove it," the thinker says, "If it is from the *truth*, is true, etc."; instead of "give God the glory"—"give truth the glory." But it's all the same to me whether God or truth wins; first and foremost, *I* want to win.

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outside herself when someone gives it to her as a gift or she pays for it. Only when she sees it as her own will she *take* it. This economic metaphor also fits with the double meaning of "speculating."

For that matter, how is an "unlimited freedom" to be thinkable within the state or society? The state may well protect one against another, but it cannot let itself be endangered by an unmeasured freedom, a so-called lack of restraint[438]. Thus, with "freedom of education," the state says only this, that it's okay with everyone who teaches as the state, or to speak more comprehensibly, as the political authority, wants to have it. For the competitors, it all depends on this "as the state wants to have it." If the clergy, for example, does not want what the state does, then it excludes itself from the *competition* (France). The limit that is necessarily drawn in the state for each and every competition is called the "state monitoring and supervision." As the state points out freedom of education within proper limits, it at the same time sets the goal of freedom of thought; because as a rule people do not think further than their teachers have thought.

Let's hear Minister Guizot:[439] "The great difficulty of the present time is the *guidance and control of the mind*. Once the church fulfilled this mission; now it isn't adequate for the task. It is from the university that this great service must be expected, and it will not fail to accomplish this. We, the *government*, have the duty to support them in this. The charter calls for the freedom of thought and of conscience."[440] So, in favor of freedom of thought and conscience, the minister demands "the guidance and control of the mind."

Catholicism dragged the applicant before the forum of the church, Protestantism before that of biblical Christianity. It would be only slightly improved if they dragged him before that of reason, as Ruge wants to do.[441] Whether the church, the Bible, or reason (to which, incidently, Luther and Hus already appealed) is the *sacred authority* essentially makes no difference.

The "question of our time" doesn't become solvable even when one puts it this way: Is any universal authorized, or only the individual? Is universality (such as state, law, custom, morality, etc.) authorized

438 It is interesting that one can also translate this word "*Zügellosigkeit*" as "anarchy."

439 François Guizot (1787-1874), a French politician and historian.

440 ▸ Chamber of Peers, April 25, 1844.

441 ▸ Arnold Ruge, "*Bruno Bauer und die Lehrfreiheit*," in Arnold Ruge (ed.) *Anekdota zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik*, volume I (Zurich and Winterthur, 1843), p. 120.

or individuality? It only becomes solvable when one no longer asks for an "authorization" at all, and doesn't carry on a mere fight against "privileges."—A "rational" educational freedom, which "acknowledges only the conscience of reason"[442] does not bring us to the goal; rather we require an *egoistic* educational freedom, an educational freedom for all ownness, in which *I* get heard and can make myself known without inhibition. That I make myself "heard,"[443] this alone is "reason,"[444] however unreasonable I may be; by making myself heard, and so hearing myself, others as well as I myself enjoy me, and at the same time consume me.

What would be gained if, as formerly the orthodox, the loyal, the moral, etc., I, was free, now the rational I would become free? Would this freedom be mine?

If I am free as "rational I," then the rational in me, or reason, is free; and this freedom of reason, or freedom of thought, has always been the ideal of the Christian world. They wanted to make thinking—and, as I said, belief is also thinking, as thinking is belief—free; the thinkers, i.e., the believers as well as the rational, were supposed to be free, while for the rest freedom was impossible. But the freedom of the thinkers is the freedom of "God's children," and at the same time the most merciless—hierarchy or rule of the thought; because *I* succumb to the thought. If thoughts are free, I am their slave, since I have no power over them and am ruled by them. But I want to have the thought, want to be full of thoughts, but at the same time I want to be thoughtless, and instead of freedom of thought, I keep thoughtlessness for myself.

If what matters is to come to an understanding and to communicate, then, of course, I can only make use of *human* means, which are at my command because I am at the same time human. And actually I have thoughts only *as human;* as I, I am at the same time thoughtless. One who can't get rid of a thought is to that extent *only* human, is a slave of *language,* this human institution, this treasury of *human* thoughts. Language or "the word" tyrannizes most

442 ▸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.
443 In German, "*vernehmbar*."
444 "*Vernunft*."

terribly over us, because it brings up against us a whole army of *fixed ideas*. Watch yourself now just once in your act of reflection, and you will find how you get further only by becoming thoughtless and speechless in each moment. You are not only thoughtless and speechless in sleep, but also in the deepest reflection; indeed, precisely then the most so. And only through this thoughtlessness, this unrecognized "freedom of thought," or freedom from thought, are you your own. Only from it do you reach the point of consuming language as your *property*.

If the thought isn't *my* thought, it's just a thought I'm pursuing; it is slave work, or the work of one who "serves at the word." For I, not a thought, am the beginning of my thinking, and so I am also its aim, even as its entire development is only a development of my self-enjoyment; for absolute or free thinking, on the contrary, thinking itself is the beginning, and it torments itself with setting up this beginning as the most extreme "abstraction" (for example, being). This very abstraction, or this thought, is then pursued further.

Absolute thinking is the affair of the human mind, and this is a sacred spirit. Therefore, this thinking is an affair of priests, who have "a sense for it," the sense for the "highest interests of humanity," for "the spirit."

For believers, truths are a *settled* matter, a fact; for the freethinker, a thing that is yet to be *settled*. However incredulous absolute thinking may be, its incredulity has its limits, and it is still a belief in the truth, in the spirit, in the idea and its final victory; it doesn't sin against the holy spirit. But all thinking that doesn't sin against the holy spirit is belief in spirits or ghosts.

I can as little give up thinking as feeling, the activity of the mind as little as the activity of the senses. As feeling is our sense for things, so thinking is our sense for essences (thoughts). Essences have their existence in all sensuous things, words in particular. The power of words follows that of things: first one is vanquished by the rod, afterwards by conviction. The power of things overcomes our courage, our spirit; against the power of a conviction, thus of the word, even torture and the sword lose their supremacy and force. People of conviction are priestly people, who resist all of Satan's temptations.

Christianity took away from the things of this world only their irresistibility, it made us independent of them. In the same way, I raise myself above truths and their power: as I am above the sensory, so I am above the truth. *Before me* truths are as common and indifferent as things; they neither thrill me nor inspire me with enthusiasm. There's not even one truth, not right, not freedom, not humanity, etc., which would endure before me and to which I would submit. They are *words,* nothing but words, as to the Christian all things are nothing but "vain things." In words and truths (every word is a truth, as Hegel asserts that one can *tell* no lies) there is no salvation for me, as little as there is for Christians in things and vanities. As the wealth of this world doesn't make me happy, so also its truths don't. It is now no longer Satan, but the spirit, that plays the temptation story; and it doesn't seduce with the things of this world, but with its thoughts, with the "glory of the idea."

Along with worldly goods, all sacred goods must also be put down as no longer of value.

Truths are phrases, idioms,[445] words (*logos*); connected together or put in line, they form logic, science, philosophy.

For thinking and speaking I need truths and words, as I need food for eating; without them I can't think or speak. Truths are people's thoughts, and therefore just as available as other things, although only available for the mind or for thinking. They are human institutions and human creations, and if one also passes them off as divine revelations, then the quality of alienness still remains in them for me; indeed, as my own creations they are already alienated from me after the act of creation.

The Christian person is the believer in thinking, who believes in the supremacy of thoughts and wants to put thoughts, so-called "principles," in command. Indeed, some examine the thoughts and choose none of them as their master without criticism, but in this they are like the dog who sniffs at people in order to smell out "his master": he's always anticipating the *ruling* thought. The Christian can reform and revolt to infinity, can demolish the ruling concepts

445 "*Redensart*" often carries the negative connotation of a hackneyed phrase or cliché.

of centuries: he will always seek for a new "principle" or a new master again, always set up a higher or "deeper" truth again, always give rise to a cult again, always proclaim a spirit called to rulership, lay down a *law* for all.

If there is even just one truth to which the human being must devote his life and his powers, because he is a human being, then he is subjected to a rule, domination, law; he is a serf. The human being, humanity, freedom, etc., are supposed to be such truths.

In contrast, a person can say this: Whether you intend to deal further with thinking depends on you; just know that, *if* in your thinking you want to bring about something significant, there are many hard problems to solve, and without overcoming them you can't get far. Thus there is no obligation, no calling, for you to mess around with thoughts (ideas, truths); but if you intend to, you will do well to use what the forces of others have already advanced in settling these difficult subjects.

Thus, anyone who intends to think certainly has a task, which *he* has set for himself consciously or unconsciously with this intention; but no one has the task of thinking or believing. —In the former case one could say: You don't go far enough, you have a limited and biased interest, you don't get to the bottom of the thing; in short, you don't completely master it. But, on the other hand, however far you get at any time, you're still always at the end, have no calling to go on, and you can have it as you will or as you're able. It goes with this, as with any other work, which you can abandon when the desire for it abandons you. Likewise, if you can no longer *believe* a thing, you don't have to force belief on yourself or deal with it continuously as with a sacred truth of the faith, the way theologians and philosophers do, but can confidently withdraw your interest from it and let it go. Priestly spirits, of course, will interpret this lack of interest of yours as "laziness, thoughtlessness, stubbornness, self-deception," and so on. But you still just let the rubbish lie. No thing, no so-called "highest interest of humanity," no "sacred cause," is worthy of you serving it and dealing with it for *its sake;* you may look for its worth in this alone, whether it is worth anything to *you* for your sake. Become like children, the biblical saying admonishes. But children have no sacred

interest and know nothing about any "good cause." They know all the more accurately what appeals to their senses, and consider, to the best of their powers, how they will get it.

Thinking will no more cease than feeling. But the power of thoughts and ideas, the rule of theories and principles, the supremacy of the spirit, in short—*hierarchy,* lasts as long as the priests, i.e., theologians, philosophers, statesmen, philistines, liberals, schoolmasters, servants, parents, children, spouses, Proudhon, George Sand, Bluntschli,[446] etc., etc., have the floor; hierarchy will last so long as people believe in, think about, or even criticize, principles; because even the most relentless criticism, which undermines all currently accepted principles, still ultimately *believes in the principle.*

Everyone criticizes, but their criteria differ. People hunt for the "right" criterion. The right criterion is the first premise. The critic starts from a proposition, a truth, a belief. This is not a creation of the critic, but of the dogmatist; indeed, it is commonly taken up out of the culture of the time without further ado, like, for example, "freedom," "humanity," etc. The critic has not "discovered the human being," but rather the dogmatist has established this truth as "the human being," and the critic, who may incidentally be the same person as the dogmatist, believes in this truth, this article of faith. In this belief, and possessed by this belief, he criticizes.

The secret of criticism is some "truth": this remains its energizing mystery.

But I make a distinction between *servile* and *own* criticism. If I criticize under the premise of a highest essence, then my criticism *serves* the essence and is carried out for its sake: for example, if I am possessed by the belief in a "free state," then I criticize everything that has an impact on it from the standpoint of whether it is convenient for this state, because I *love* this state; if I criticize as a religious person, then I divide everything into the divine and the diabolical, and in the face of my criticism, nature consists of signs of God or signs of the devil (thus names like: God's Gift, God Mountain, the Devil's Pulpit, etc.), human beings of believers and unbelievers, etc.; if I criticize while I believe in the human as the "true essence," then I first of

446 A Swiss right liberal jurist and politician.

all divide everything into human beings and inhuman monsters, etc.

Criticism has remained to this day a labor of love: because at all times we practiced it for the love of some essence. All servile criticism is a product of love, an instance of being possessed, and proceeds according to the New Testament precept: "test everything; hold fast what is *good*."[447] "The good" is the touchstone, the criterion. The good, returning under a thousand names and forms, always remained the premise, remained the dogmatic fixed point for this criticism, remained the—fixed idea.

The critic, when he sets out to work, presupposes the "truth," and searches for the truth in the belief that it is to be found. He wants to determine the true, and has in it precisely that "good."

Presupposing means nothing less than giving precedence to a thought, or thinking something above all other things and thinking the rest from this *thing that has been thought,* i.e., measuring and criticizing it from this. In different words, this is as much as to say that thinking should begin with something already thought. If thinking began at all, instead of being begun, if thinking were a subject, an active personality of its own, even as the plant is such, then there would certainly be no abandoning the idea that thinking must begin with itself. But the personification of thinking is precisely what brings about those innumerable errors. In the Hegelian system, people always talk as if thinking or "the thinking spirit," i.e., personified thinking, thinking as a ghost, thought and acted; in critical liberalism it is always said: criticism does this and that, or else, "self-consciousness" finds this or that. But if thinking counts as a personal actor, thinking itself must be presupposed; if criticism counts as such, a thought must likewise precede it. Thinking and criticism could only be active starting from themselves, would have to themselves be the premise of their activity, since, without being, they could not be active. But thinking, as something presupposed, is a fixed thought, a *dogma;* thinking and criticism can, therefore, only start from a *dogma,* from a thought, a fixed idea, a premise.

This brings us back to what I said above, that Christianity consists in the development of a world of thoughts, or that it is the true

447 ▸ I Thessalonians 5:21.

"freedom of thought," the "free thought," the "free spirit." "True" criticism, which I called "servile," is therefore also "free" criticism, because it is not *my own*.

The situation is different when what is yours is not made into a thing-for-itself, is not personified, is not made independent as a "mind" of its own. *Your* thinking does not have "thinking" as a premise, but *you*. But do you thus presuppose yourself? Yes, but not for me; rather, for my thinking. Before my thinking—I am. From this it follows that my thinking is not preceded by a *thought,* or that my thinking is without a "premise." For the premise which I am for my thinking is not a thing *made by thinking,* not a thing *thought of,* but is *posited thinking itself,* is the *owner* of the thinking, and proves only that thinking is nothing more than—*property,* i.e., that an "independent" thinking, a "thinking spirit," doesn't exist at all.

This reversal of the usual way of looking at things might look so much like empty playing with abstractions that even those against whom it is aimed would yield to its harmless expression, if no practical consequences were connected to it.

To put these in a concise phrase, I now assert that the human being is not the measure of all things, but rather I am this measure. The servile critic has in mind another essence, an idea, which he intends to serve; therefore he only kills the false idols for his god. What is done for the love of this essence, what else would it be but a—labor of love? But when I criticize, I don't even have myself in mind, but am only enjoying myself, amusing myself according to my taste; depending on my needs I chew the thing up or only breathe in its aroma.

The distinction between the two will be shown more eloquently when one considers that the servile critic, because love guides him, assumes that he is serving the thing itself.

People will not give up, but will seek, *the* truth, or "truth in general." What is it other than the *être supreme*,[448] the highest essence? Even "true criticism" would have to despair if it lost faith in the truth. And yet truth is only a—*thought,* but not just any thought; rather it is the thought that is above every thought, the indisputable thought; it is *thought* itself, that first makes all others sacred; it is the consecration

448 "Supreme being," in French in the original.

of thoughts, the "absolute," the "sacred" thought. Truth lasts longer than all gods; because only in service and love for it have people overthrown gods and finally God himself. Truth outlasts the downfall of the world of gods, because it is the immortal soul of this transitory world of gods; it is divinity itself.

I'll answer Pilate's question: What is truth? Truth is the free thought, the free idea, the free spirit; truth is what is free from you, what is not your own, what is not in your power. But truth is also what is completely dependent, impersonal, unreal, and bodiless; truth cannot arise as you can arise, cannot move, change, develop; truth awaits and receives everything from you, and is itself only through you, because it exists only—in your head. You admit that truth is a thought, but not every idea is true, or as you also probably express it, not every thought is really and truly a thought. And how do you measure and recognize the true thought? By your powerlessness; namely, by your no longer being able to harm it! If it overpowers you, inspires you, and carries you away, then you hold it to be the true one. Its rulership over you certifies its truth for you. And when it possesses you, and you are possessed by it, then you are well with it because you have found your—*lord and master.* While you were seeking for the truth, what did you heart long for there? For your master! You did not strive for *your* power, but for a Powerful One, and wanted to exalt a Powerful One ("Exalt the Lord our God!").[449] The truth, my dear Pilate, is—the Lord, and all who seek the truth, seek and praise the Lord. Where does the Lord exist? Where else but in your head? And wherever you believe that you actually see him, there he is a—ghost; the Lord is indeed merely something thought up, and it was only the Christian anguish and torment to make the invisible visible, to make the spiritual corporeal, that produced the ghost and was the frightful misery of belief in ghosts.

As long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself, and you are a—*servant*, a—*religious person.* You alone are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing at all before you. Certainly, you also ask about the truth, certainly you also criticize, but you don't ask about any "higher truth"—namely, one

449 See Psalms 99:5.

that would be higher than you, and you don't criticize the criterion of such a truth. You deal with thoughts and conceptions as with the appearances of things, only with the aim of making them palatable, enjoyable, and your own; you want only to master them and become their *owner;* you want to orient yourself and feel at home in them, and you find them true or see them in their true light, when they can no longer escape you, no longer have any unseized or uncomprehended place, or when they are *right for you,* when they are *your property.* If, further on, they become heavier again, wrest themselves again from your power, then that's just their untruth, namely, your powerlessness. Your powerlessness is their power, your humbling is their sovereignty. So you are their truth, or it is the nothing that you are for them and in which they dissolve, their truth is their *nothingness.*

Only as my property do spirits, truths, find rest; and then they are only actual when they get deprived of their troublesome existence and made into my property, when it is no longer said: "Truth develops itself, rules, asserts itself; history (also a concept) is victorious," and the like. Truth has never been victorious, but was always my *means* to victory, like the sword ("the sword of truth"). The truth is dead, a letter, a word, a material that I can consume. All truth by itself is dead, a corpse; it is alive only in the same way that my lungs are alive, namely to the extent of my own vitality. Truths are material like herbs and weeds; as to whether herb or weed, the decision is mine.

To me, objects are only material that I consume. Wherever I reach out my hand I grasp a truth, which I prepare for myself. The truth is assured to me, and I don't need to long for it. To do the truth a service is never my intention. To me it is just nourishment for my thinking head, like the potato for my digesting stomach, or the friend for my convivial heart. As long as I have the desire and strength to think, I make use of every truth only to digest according to my ability. As actuality or worldliness is "vain and void" for the Christian, so the truth is for me. It exists just as much as the things of the world go on existing, even though the Christian has proven their nothingness; but it is vain, because it has its *value* not *in itself* but *in me. Of itself* it

is *worthless.* The truth is a—*creature.*[450]

As you produce countless things through your activity, indeed, as you reshape the earth and set up human works everywhere, so you may also determine countless truths through your thinking, and we will gladly enjoy them. However, just as I do not like to give myself over to mechanically serving your newly revealed machines, but only help to set them in motion for my benefit, so also I will only use your truths, without letting myself be used for their demands.

All truths *beneath* me are dear to me; any truth *above* me, any truth I must *follow,* I do not recognize. For me there is no truth, because nothing goes above me! Not even my essence, not even the human essence, goes above me! Namely, above me, this "drop in the bucket," this "insignificant human being"!

You believe you have done the utmost when you boldly claim that, because every time period has its own truth, there is no "absolute truth." Even with this you still leave to each time period its truth, and so really in fact create an "absolute truth," a truth that no time is missing, because every time period, whatever its truth may be, still has a "truth."

Is this only supposed to say that people have been thinking in every time period, and therefore have had thoughts or truths, and that these were different in the following period than they'd been in the earlier one? No, it is supposed to mean that each time period had its "truth of faith"; and, in fact, none has yet appeared in which a "higher truth" has not been acknowledged, a truth that people believed they had to subject themselves to as "highness and majesty." Every truth of a time period is its fixed idea, and if people later found another truth, this always happened only because they sought another; they only reformed the folly and put modern dress on it. Because people still wanted—who would dare to doubt the legitimacy of this?—people wanted to be "inspired by an idea." People wanted to be ruled—possessed, by a *thought!* The most modern ruler of this kind is "our essence" or "the human being."

For all free criticism a thought was the criterion; for own criticism I

450 "*Kreatur*" in German is often used derogatorily as a belittling term and can also be translated as "minion."

am, I, the unspeakable, and therefore not merely something thought; because what is merely thought is always speakable, since word and thought coincide. True is what is mine, untrue is that whose own I am; true, for example, the association; untrue, the state and society. "Free-and-true" criticism provides for the consistent domination of a thought, an idea, a spirit; "own" criticism, for nothing but my *self-enjoyment.* But in the latter it in fact resembles—and we do not want to spare it this "disgrace"!—instinct's bestial critique. For me, as for the criticizing beast, it's only about *me* and not "about the cause." *I* am the criterion of truth, but I am not an idea, but rather more than an idea, i.e., inexpressible. *My* criticism is not a "free" one, not free from me, and not a "servile" one, not in service to an Idea, but an *own* criticism.

True or human criticism finds out only whether something *is favorable* to the human being, to the true human being; but through own criticism you determine whether it is favorable to *you.*

Free criticism deals with ideas and is therefore always theoretical. However it may rage against ideas, it still isn't rid of them. It keeps fighting with the ghosts, but it can only do this while it thinks of them as ghosts. The ideas it deals with do not completely disappear; the morning breeze of a new day doesn't scare them away.

The critic can indeed achieve tranquility before ideas, but he never gets *rid* of them; in other words, he will never realize that above the *embodied human being*, nothing higher exists—to wit, his humanity, freedom, etc. He is still left with a "calling" as a human being, "humanity." And this idea of humanity remains unrealized, because it remains and is to remain just an "idea."

On the other hand, if I grasp the idea as *my* idea, then it is already realized, because *I* am its reality; its reality consists in the fact that I, the embodied one, have it.

People say that the idea of freedom realizes itself in the history of the world.[451] On the contrary, the idea is real the moment a person thinks it, and it is real to the extent that it is an idea, i.e., to the extent

451 Among these "people" is Hegel, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where he insists that history, properly understood, is the development of the idea of freedom.

that I think it or *have* it. The idea of freedom doesn't develop itself, but rather people develop themselves, and in this self-development naturally also develop their thinking.

In short, the critic is not an *owner,* because he still struggles with ideas as with powerful strangers, as the Christian is not the owner of his "bad desires" as long as he has to fight them; for the one who battles against vice, vice *exists.*

Criticism remains stuck in the "freedom of knowledge," freedom of the mind, and the mind gains its rightful freedom when it fills itself with the pure, true idea; this is freedom of thinking, that which cannot be without thoughts.

Criticism beats one idea only with another; for example, that of privilege with that of humanity, or that of egoism with that of unselfishness.

In any case, the beginning of Christianity appears again in its critical end, since here as there, "egoism" is being fought. I am not supposed to put myself, the individual, forward, but the idea, the universal.

Indeed, the war of the priesthood with *egoism,* of the spiritually minded against the worldly minded, forms the contents of the whole of Christian history. In the latest criticism, this war only becomes all-embracing, fanaticism complete. True, it can only die, after it has lived and raged itself out.

Whether what I think and do is Christian, what do I care? Whether it is human, liberal, humane; whether inhuman, illiberal, inhumane—what heed do I give to that? If only it aims to achieve what I want, if only I satisfy myself in it, then cover it with predicates as you will; it's all the same to me.

I may also, in the very next moment, defend myself against my former thoughts; I am also likely to suddenly change my acts; but not because they don't correspond to the Christian spirit, not because they go against eternal human rights, not because they slap the idea of humanness, humanity, and humanitarianism in the face, but—because I'm no longer completely there, because these thoughts and acts no longer give me full enjoyment, because I doubt the earlier

thought or no longer find pleasure in the way of action I'd practiced.

As the world as property has become a *material* with which I start to do what I want, so spirit as property must also sink down to a *material,* before which I hold no more sacred awe. Then, first of all, I will no longer shudder before a thought, however reckless or "devilish" it may seem, because if it threatens to become uncomfortable and unsatisfying for *me,* its end lies in my power; but I will also not shrink back before any action because a spirit of godlessness, immorality, unlawfulness, dwells in it, as little as St. Boniface would refrain from cutting down the sacred oak of the heathens from religious scruples. Once the *things* of the world have become vain, so too the *thoughts* of the spirit must become vain.

No thought is sacred, since no thought counts as "devotions"; no feeling is sacred (no sacred feeling of friendship, mother's feelings, etc.), no belief is sacred. They are all *alienable,* my alienable property, and will be destroyed, as they are created, by *me.*

The Christian can lose all *things* or objects, the most beloved persons, these objects of his love, without giving up himself, that is, in the Christian sense, his spirit, his soul, for lost. The owner can throw away all the *thoughts* that were dear to his heart and kindled his enthusiasm, and will likewise "win back a thousandfold again," because he, their creator, remains.

Unconsciously and involuntarily we all strive for ownness, and there would hardly be one among us who has not given up a sacred feeling, a sacred thought, a sacred belief; indeed, we probably meet no one who could not still deliver himself of one or another of his sacred thoughts. Our entire battle against conviction starts from the view that we are perhaps capable of driving our opponent out from his entrenchment of thought. But what I do unconsciously, I half-do, and that's why after every victory over a faith, I again become the *prisoner* (possessed) of a faith, which then takes my whole self again into its *service,* and makes me an enthusiast for reason after I stopped being enthusiastic about the Bible, or an enthusiast for the idea of humanity after I have fought long enough for Christianity.

Most likely, as an owner of thoughts, I will protect my property with my shield, just like, as an owner of things, I don't willingly let

everybody help himself to them; but at the same time I'll look forward to the outcome of the battle with a smile, lay the shield on the corpses of my thoughts and my beliefs with a smile, triumph when I'm beaten with a smile. That's simply the humor of the thing. Everyone who has "loftier feelings" is able to vent his humor at people's pettiness; but letting it play with all "great thoughts, lofty feelings, noble exaltations, and sacred beliefs" implies that I am the owner of all.

If religion has put forward the proposition that we are all of us sinners, I set another against it: we are all of us perfect! Because, in each moment, we are all we can be, and never need to be more. Because no defect sticks to us, sin also has no meaning. Show me a sinner still in the world, when no one any longer needs to do what suits a higher power! If I need do only what suits myself, I am not a sinner when I don't do what suits myself, because in myself I don't offend a "sacred being"; however, if I am supposed to be religious, then I must do what suits God; if I am supposed to act humanly, then I must do what suits the human essence, the idea of humanity, etc. What religion calls the "sinner," humanitarianism calls the "egoist." But again, if I don't need to do what suits any other, is the "egoist," in whom humanitarianism has given birth to a new-fangled devil, anything more than a bit of nonsense? The egoist before whom the humane shudder is as much a phantasm as the devil is: he exists only as a nightmare and a phantasmic image in their brain. If they were not naively drifting back and forth in the old-fashioned opposition between good and evil, to which they've given the modern names of "humane" and "egoistic," they wouldn't have polished up the hoary "sinner" into the "egoist" either, and sewed a new patch onto an old cloak.[452] But they could do nothing else, because they consider it their task to be "human beings." They are rid of the Good One, good has remained![453]

We are all of us perfect, and on the whole earth there is not one person who is a sinner! There are lunatics who imagine themselves to be God the Father, God the Son, or the man in the moon, and then the world also swarms with fools who think that they are sinners; but

452 A reference to Matthew 9:16.

453 A parody of Mephistopheles' words in "The Witch's Kitchen" in Goethe's *Faust*, Part One, line 2509.

as the former are not the man in the moon, so the latter are—not sinners. Their sin is imaginary.

But someone insidiously interjects, their lunacy or their possessedness is at least their sin. Their possessedness is nothing but what they—could bring about, the result of their development, just as Luther's faith in the Bible was all that he was—capable of bringing out. The one brings himself into the madhouse with his development; the other, with his, brings himself into the Pantheon and loses—Valhalla.

There is no sinner and no sinful egoism!

Get away from me with your "love of humanity"! Sneak in, you philanthropist, into the "dens of vice," linger sometime in the throng of the great city. Won't you everywhere find sin, and sin, and yet more sin? Won't you wail over corrupt humanity, lament about the monstrous egoism? Will you see a rich person without finding him ruthless and "egoistic"? You may already call yourself an atheist, but you remain true to the Christian feeling that a camel will more easily go through the eye of a needle[454] than a rich person will not be an "inhuman monster." How many do you see anyway that you wouldn't throw into the "egoistic mass"? What then has your love of humanity found? Nothing but unlovable human beings! And where do they all come from? From you, from your love of humanity! You've brought the sinner in your head with you, therefore you found him, therefore you shoved him in everywhere. If you don't call people sinners, then they aren't; you alone are the creator of sinners; you, who imagine that you love people, you yourself throw them into the mire of sin, you yourself divide them into virtuous and vicious, human beings and inhuman monsters; you yourself defile them with the venom of your possessedness; because you don't love *human beings,* but *the human being.* But I tell you, you have never seen a sinner, you have only—dreamed him.

My self-enjoyment is spoiled for me when I think that I have to serve another, when I imagine that I'm under obligation to him, when I believe that I am called to "self-sacrifice," "devotion," "zeal." Well, if I no longer serve any idea, any "higher essence," then it's obvious that I no longer serve any human being either, but—under every

454 See Matthew 19:24.

circumstance—*myself*. Thus, however, I am not merely in fact or in being, but also for my consciousness, the—unique.

There is more that belongs to *you* than the divine, the human, etc.; *yours* belongs to you.

Look at yourself as more powerful than what they make you out to be, and you have more power; look upon yourself as more, and you have more.

You are then not merely *called* to everything divine, *entitled* to everything human, but *owner* of what is yours, i.e., of all that you possess the strength to make your own; in other words, you are fit and qualified for all that is yours.

People have always reckoned that they must give me a purpose that lies outside myself, so that finally they demanded that I should call upon the human because I am—a human. This is the Christian magic circle. Fichte's *I* is also the same essence outside me, because *I* is everyone, and, if only this *I* has rights, then it is "the *I*," I am not it. But I am not one *I* alongside other *I*s, but the sole *I*: I am unique. Therefore my needs are unique, my actions, in short, everything about me is unique. And it's only as this unique *I* that I take everything as mine to own, as I am active and develop myself only as this. I don't develop human beings, nor as a human being, but as *I*, I develop—myself.

This is the sense of the—unique.

2.3 The Unique

Pre-Christian and Christian times pursue opposite goals; the former wants to idealize the real, the latter to realize the ideal; the former seeks the "holy spirit," the latter the "glorified body." Thus, the former closes with insensitiveness to the real, with "contempt for the world"; the latter will end with the casting off of ideals, with "contempt for the spirit."

The opposition between the real and the ideal is an irreconcilable one, and the one can never become the other: if the ideal became the real, it would no longer be the ideal; and if the real became the ideal, there would only be the ideal, and the real wouldn't be at all. The opposition between the two is not to be overcome unless somebody destroys them both. Only in this "somebody," the third party, does the opposition find its end; but otherwise idea and reality will never meet. The idea cannot be realized in such a way that it remains an idea, but only if it dies as an idea; and the same applies to the real.

But now we have before us in the ancients, the followers of the idea, and in the moderns, the followers of reality. Neither gets away from this opposition, and both only languish, the one side after the spirit, and when this yearning of the ancient world was satisfied and this spirit seemed to have come, the other side immediately again after the secularization of this spirit, which must forever remain a "pious wish."

The pious wish of the ancients was *sanctity,* the pious wish of the moderns is *embodiment*. But as antiquity had to go under, if its longing was to be satisfied (because it consisted only of this longing), so also embodiment can never be attained within the ring of Christianity.

As the train of sanctification or purification runs through the old world (ablutions, etc.), so that of becoming flesh runs through the Christian world: God plummets down into this world, becomes flesh, and wants to redeem it, i.e., fill it with himself; but since he is "the idea" or "the spirit," in the end, people (for example, Hegel) introduce the idea into everything, into the world, and prove "that the idea, that reason, is in everything." What the heathen Stoics put up as "the wise man" corresponds in today's learning to "the human being," the latter, like the former, a *fleshless* being. The unreal "wise man," this bodiless "holy one" of the Stoics, became an actual person, a bodily "holy one," in the God *made flesh;* the non-actual "human being," the bodiless I, will become actual in the *embodied I*, in me.

The question of "God's existence" winds its way through Christianity; taken up over and over again, it bears witness that the urge for existence, embodiment, personality, actuality, continually occupied the mind,[455] because it never found an adequate solution. The question of God's existence finally disappeared, but only to arise again in the proposition that the "divine" has existence (Feuerbach). But this too has no existence, and the last resort, that the "purely human" can be realized, won't offer protection for much longer. No idea has existence, because none is capable of embodiment. The scholastic controversy over realism and nominalism has the same content; in short, this weaves itself through all Christian history, and cannot end in it.

The Christian world is working to realize ideas in the individual relations of life, in the institutions and laws of the church and the state; but they are reluctant and always keep something back unmaterialized (unrealizable). Still it restlessly chases after this materiality, regardless of how much *embodiment* is always lacking.

For the realizer lays little on realities, but places everything on the same being realizations of the idea. Thus, he is constantly reexamining whether the realized, in truth, has the idea, its kernel, dwelling in it; and as he tests the real, at the same time he tests the idea, whether it can be realized in the way he thinks it, or whether he thinks it incorrectly, and therefore makes it unworkable.

455 "*Gemüt*" ("soul," "heart," "nature," disposition," as well as "mind") rather than "*Geist*" in this instance.

As existences, family, state, etc. are no longer supposed to concern the Christian; unlike the ancients, Christians are not supposed to sacrifice themselves for these "divine things," but rather they should be used to bring the *spirit to life* in them. The *actual* family has become unimportant, and from it an ideal one, which would be the "truly real" one, is supposed to arise, a sacred family, blessed by God, or, to the liberal way of thinking, a "rational" family. Among the ancients, family, state, fatherland, etc. are divine as *existing things;* among the moderns, they still await divinity, are sinful as they exist, and still have to be "redeemed," i.e., must become truly real. This has the following meaning: The family, etc., are not the existing and real, but the divine, the idea, is existing and real; whether *this* family will make itself real by taking in the truly real, the idea, is still debatable. It is not the task of the individual to serve the family as the divine, but, on the contrary, to serve the divine and feed the ungodly family to it, i.e., to subjugate everything in the name of the idea, to fly the banner of the idea over everything, to bring the idea to real efficacy.

But since the concern of Christianity, like that of antiquity, is for the *divine,* this is where they always come out from their opposite paths. At the end of heathenism, the divine becomes *other-worldly;* at the end of Christianity, *this-worldly.* Antiquity does not succeed in putting it completely outside of the world, and when Christianity accomplishes this task, the divine immediately longs to return to the world and wants to "redeem" the world. But within Christianity, it does not and cannot reach the point where the divine as *this-worldly* would actually itself become the *worldly:* there is enough left which, as the "bad," irrational, random, egoistic, the "worldly" in the bad sense, does and must keep itself unpenetrated. Christianity begins with God becoming man, and it carries out its work of conversion and redemption throughout all time, to prepare a reception for God in all human beings and in everything human, and to penetrate everything with the spirit: it keeps to it, to prepare a place for the "spirit."

When the accent was finally placed on the human being or humanity, it was again the idea that was "*called eternal*": "The human being never dies!" Now they thought that they had found the reality of the idea: *The* human is the *I* of history, of world history; it is he,

this *ideal*, which actually develops, i.e., *realizes,* himself. He is the actually real, the embodied one, because history is his body, in which individuals are just the limbs. Christ is the *I* of world history, even the pre-Christian ones; in the modern perspective, it is the human being, the image of Christ has developed into a human image: the human being as such, the quintessential human being, is the "center" of history. In "humanity" the imaginary beginning returns; because "the human being" is as imaginary as Christ is. The "human being," as the *I* of world history, closes the cycle of Christian perspectives.

The magic circle of Christianity would be broken, if the tension between existence and calling, i.e., between me as I am and me as I'm supposed to be, stopped. It persists only as the longing of the idea for its embodiment and disappears with the diminishing distinction between the two. Only if the idea remains—the idea as human being, or humanity as a bodiless idea—does Christianity still exist. The embodied idea, the embodied or "perfected" spirit, floats before the Christian as "the end of days" or as the "purpose of history"; it is not present to him.

The individual can only participate in the founding of the Kingdom of God, or, according to the modern depiction of the same thing, in the development and history of humanity; and only insofar as he participates in it, does a Christian, or in the modern expression, human value befit him; in all other respects, he is dust and a worm-bag.

That the individual is a world history for himself, and possesses his property in the rest of the world's history, this goes beyond what is Christian. For the Christian world history is the higher thing, because it is the history of Christ or "of the human being"; to the egoist only *his* history has value, because he only wants to develop *himself,* not the idea of humanity; not God's plan, not the intentions of providence, not freedom, etc. He doesn't look upon himself as a tool of the idea or a vessel of God, he recognizes no calling, he doesn't imagine that he exists to further the development of humanity and that he has to contribute his mite to it, but rather he enjoys life, unconcerned about how well or badly humanity may fare from it. If it didn't allow the misunderstanding that a state of nature is to be

praised, one might be reminded of Lenau's *The Three Gypsies.*[456] — What, am I in the world for this purpose, to realize ideas? To do my part perhaps toward the realization of the idea of the "state" through my citizenship, or to bring the idea of the family into an existence through my marriage, as husband and father? How I dispute such a calling! I live as little after a calling as the flower grows and gives fragrance after a calling.

The ideal "human being" is *realized* when the Christian view is overturned in the statement: "I, this unique, am the human being." The conceptual question: "What is the human being?"—has then changed into the personal question: "Who is the human being?" With "what" one looks for the concept in order to realize it; with "who" there is no longer any question at all, but the answer present personally in the questioner himself: the question itself answers itself.

They say of God, "Names name you not." This is true of me: no *concept* expresses me, nothing that is said to be my essence exhausts me; they are only names. They also say of God that he is perfect and has no calling to strive for perfection. This too is true of me alone.

I am *owner* of my power, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique* the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, from which he is born. Every higher essence over me, be it God, be it the human being, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and only pales before the sun of this awareness. If I base my affair on myself, the unique, then it stands on the transient, the mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say:

I have based my affair on nothing.

End

456 A poem by Nikolaus Lenau, an Austrian poet.

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"I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself create everything **as creator**."

—Max Stirner

FIRST NEW ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TRANSLATION SINCE 1907.

The Unique and Its Property brings to the world a radical view: egoism, the notion that the individual is the measure of all things. Max Stirner's opus was first published in Germany in 1844. In 1907 Benjamin R. Tucker published the first English-language translation of *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum,* carried out by Steven T. Byington and titled *The Ego and His Own*. Every edition of Stirner's book since that time has been a reproduction or revision of the Byington translation—until now.

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